



“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6).

### **What Does Jesus Say About Marriage?**

**Lesson Subject:** Jesus stressed the permanent nature of the marriage relationship.

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**Topic:** Family; Marriage.

God wants people to get married, establish homes, and rear children. That has been His design since the creation of male and female (Genesis 1:26-31). His approval of marriage is shown by His bringing together the first man and woman in the marriage relationship (Genesis 2:21, 22).

Jesus approved marriage. He attended a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee and honored it by performing His first miracle there (John 2:1-11). He blessed children born to the marriage union (Matthew 19:13-15). He taught on God's purpose in marriage, as indicated in the text for this study. There is no question about Jesus' approval of marriage.

The marriage commitment is in disfavor today. The prevalence of desertion and divorce is challenging our traditional standards. But that does not mean that marriage is any less important than it has ever been. It is still important to God and to humans.

This study will investigate what Jesus said about marriage, with some related scriptures brought into the discussion. What He says about marriage is God's word on it. God has spoken to us by His own Son in the person of Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-4). Let us approach the subject with minds opened to be taught.

#### **I. QUESTIONS ON MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:3)**

**A. An evil intent is behind many questions on marriage.** Certain

ones came to Jesus, *"tempting him"* with their questions (Matthew 19:3). They were not concerned to know truth with the desire to obey it. They wanted to catch Jesus in His speech that they might be able to accuse Him.

Many people raise questions about marriage today out of a desire to cover their own mistakes or sins. The devil used that method in Eden, asking Eve, *"Hath God said . . . ?"* (Genesis 3:1). Such *"doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings"* is not to be a part of the Christian's life-style (I Timothy 6:4, 5). Take God's Word and let that settle it.

**B. A debate may rage over God's instructions on marriage.**

Deuteronomy 24:1, 2 is the first biblical record of God permitting divorce in His divine law. If a husband found *"some uncleanness"* in his wife, he could give her a writing of divorce and the marriage contract was terminated. But the interpreters had to determine what the "uncleanness" meant, and that is where the debate began to rage. People are still debating over what is a biblical basis for divorce, what the Scriptures teach about the remarriage of one who is divorced, and kindred questions. God makes His law simple. Man makes it complicated in an effort to excuse his sin.

## II. ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:4-6)

**A. God designed humans as male and female for the purpose of marriage.** Jesus said, *"He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh"* (Matthew 19:4, 5). That was the Lord's summary of the record of Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25. Since marriage was God's design for us, it is holy in all its aspects.

**B. God declared the nature of marriage to be a commitment.** Notice the words *"leave"* and *"cleave"* in Jesus' statement (Matthew 19:5). Those are God's words (Genesis 2:24). It means that a man's supreme commitment in marriage is to be to his wife. The term *"cleave"* is literally translated "be joined." Like the limb is joined to the trunk of the tree, or like the arm is joined to the body, so the husband and wife are joined each to the other. Divorce is like amputating a limb of one's body. It may relieve one problem, but it is painful and leads to other problems.

**C. God desires that marriage be a permanent union.** He designed it that way. He said, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"* (Matthew 19:6). In another place He said He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). It is a disruption of the divine plan for marriage. Although

He made provision for divorce and remarriage in the law (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), that was done only *"because of the hardness of (their) hearts"*; He never intended it to be that way when He designed marriage (Matthew 19,8).

### III. UNION IN MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:5, 6)

**A. There is a union in nature.** The man and the woman each came from the creative hand of God. God made man of the dust of the earth, *"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"* (Genesis 2:7). Then He made the woman from a rib taken from man (Genesis 2:21, 22). When Adam saw the woman, he knew she was one of his own kind and said, *"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man"* (Genesis 2:23). They were one in marriage because they were one in nature.

**B. There is a union in purpose.** The "cleaving" of the marriage relationship takes place because of this unity of purpose. The prophet wrote of this relationship, *"Did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth"* (Malachi 2:15). God designed marriage so the family would produce children who would be trained to live holily before Him.

**C. There is a union in body.** *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh"* (Matthew 19:6). There is nothing base or sinful about the physical relationship in marriage. God designed it that way, and He does not design evil things. The physical union is so important that God said the wife's body belongs to the husband and the husband's body belongs to the wife. Neither has the right to withhold his/her body from the other (I Corinthians 7:3-5). Read the Song of Solomon and see God's estimate of human sexuality in marriage.

**D. There is a union in spirit.** The man is incomplete without the woman; the woman is incomplete without the man (I Corinthians 11:11). Each finds delight in the other. So real is that union of spirit that neither desires another partner except the one to whom he is bound in the marriage covenant. With a union in nature, purpose, body, and spirit, it is contrary to nature for one to desire the dissolving of that union. That is why divorce is looked on so seriously in the Bible.

### IV. TERMINATION OF MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:7-9)

**A. The Bible gives permission for marriage to be terminated.** There

are three primary causes for divorce in the Old Testament. (1) "*Uncleanness*" in a wife would permit divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Following that divorce she could be married to another man without committing sin. (2) Religious apostasy of a marriage partner required divorce (Ezra 10:2-14; Deuteronomy 7:1-6). No choice was given the men of Israel in that case. (3) Failure of a master to provide a maidservant "*her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage*" permitted her to be released from a marriage without paying money for her release (Exodus 21:7-11).

Adultery was not a ground for divorce in the Old Testament. Adultery was punished by death, not by divorce (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 22:22).

**B. Human depravity perverted the provision for marriage to be terminated.** The hardness of men's hearts caused the divorce proceeding to be instituted in the first place (Matthew 19:8). That same hardness made them pervert the permission.

The divorce proceeding was to limit the indiscriminate exercise of divorce according to the husband's pleasure (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Men often interpreted "*uncleanness*" in the wife with such latitude that one could "*Put away his wife for every cause*" (Matthew 19:3). What was an act of mercy on God's part became a license to sin on man's part, not because God designed it that way but because man perverted it. Read Malachi 2:14,15 to see God's attitude toward liberal divorce practices!

**C. Divine permission must be distinguished from divine intention in the termination of marriage.** Promiscuous divorce causes one to "*deal treacherously*" against his partner (Malachi 2:14, 15). Jesus' statement "*from the beginning it was not so*" (Matthew 19:8) means, "it was not intended that way at the beginning." The divine intention was that each marriage covenant be permanent to the blessing of the race. Man's depravity perverted the sanctity of marriage.

**D. Jesus' limitation restricts the termination of marriage.** Jesus appears to give only one occasion when marriage is to be terminated. When a partner is guilty of "*fornication*" (Greek *porneia*, immorality, illicit sexual intercourse of any kind), divorce is permitted. Otherwise, to divorce and remarry is "*to commit adultery*" (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Beyond that single permission, Jesus did not go.

## V. LIMITATION OF MARRIAGE (Matthew 19:10-12)

There are some people who should not marry. First, those who are physically incapable of the sexual part of marriage should not marry. Those who feel marriage will limit their effectiveness in the service of God should

not marry. But it is evident that such *"eunuchs,"* as they are called in Matthew 19:12, are the exception rather than the rule in human society. Marriage is the normal state of the vast majority of our race. It is honorable before God and is recommended to men and women.

## VI. BLESSINGS OF MARRIAGE (Matthew 9:13-15)

Children are one of the special blessings God gives in marriage. The Bible is quite clear that *"children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. . . . He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD"* (Psalms 127:3; 113:9). Look on your children, or the children of other couples, as a special blessing from God upon the home.

Children are blessed by Jesus. They are an example of the humility required for greatness in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:4). They are the special representatives of Jesus among men, manifesting His precious spirit (Luke 9:47,48). Their angels are in the presence of God beholding His face (Matthew 18:10). No wonder Jesus said, *"Of such is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 19:14). Children hold a special place in Jesus' heart, so those who love children must be precious to Him also.

God is interested in our home life. He is concerned about whether we marry, whom we marry, what our relationships are in marriage, whether we maintain our marriage, and the children born to us in marriage. Commit your marriage, your home, and every member of your family to Him. *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"* (Psalm 127:1).

## QUESTIONS

1. How would you define marriage?
2. Why did God institute marriage in human society?
3. Why have men perverted God's intention in marriage?
4. What does Deuteronomy 24:1 say about termination of marriage?
5. How does Matthew 19:4, 5 show permanence in marriage?
6. What is the significance of "cleave" in Matthew 19:5?
7. What does Malachi 2:15 say about the purpose of marriage?
8. Why is divorce such a serious matter?
9. What did Jesus say about God and divorce?
10. How can you make your marriage safe from failure?