

**Sermon Series:** "The Bible and The Social Issues Today"

**Sermon 3:** "The Biblical View of Divorce"

**By:** Rev Dr losmar Alvarez

**Where:** St John UMC

**Date:** June 2nd, 2024

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:1-11

## **Divorce**

**19** When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. <sup>2</sup>Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

<sup>3</sup>Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “**Is it lawful** for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

<sup>4</sup>“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’<sup>5</sup> and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? <sup>6</sup>So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

<sup>7</sup>“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a **certificate of divorce** and send her away?”

<sup>8</sup>Jesus replied, “**Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.** <sup>9</sup>I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

<sup>10</sup>The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

**Focus:** This sermon on divorce will focus on understanding God's heart and intention for marriage, highlighting the importance of commitment, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the context of divorce. It also addresses the struggles and challenges that divorced individuals and families face and how the church can provide support and care to help them heal and move forward in their journey. Ultimately, the sermon could emphasize the love, grace, and redemption that God offers to all, regardless of their past experiences.

## **Introduction:**

Divorce is a topic that affects many families and individuals in our society today. It is a complex and painful process that can affect those involved. As Christians, it is important for us to understand what the Bible teaches about divorce and how we can provide support and care to those who are going through this experience.

Comparing divorce statistics between the secular world and Christian churchgoers reveals interesting insights:

## 10 Biggest Divorce Causes in the XXI Century.

1- Alcoholism	6- Finances
2- Lack of intimacy - Adultery	7- Mental illnesses
3- Emotional infidelity	8- Physical disability
4- In-Laws - In-laws	9- Lack of communication
5- Narcissists, Controllers, Manipulators, Toxic	

### 1. \*\*Secular Divorce Rates:

- In the United States, the overall divorce rate is approximately 39%. This suggests that almost four in ten marriages end in divorce.
- The National Center for Family & Marriage Research (NCFMR) indicates a decrease in divorce rates from 2008 to 2018.

### 2. \*\*Divorce Rates among Christians:

- According to the Pew Research Center, Christians report lower divorce rates compared to the general population.
- A Barna Group study found that 33% of born-again Christians have experienced divorce, which is lower than the national average but not dramatically different.

### 3. \*\*Factors Influencing Divorce Rates in the Church:

- Regular church attendance appears to correlate with lower divorce rates. Practicing Christians who frequently attend church (weekly or more) tend to have stronger marital stability.
- A study by the Institute for Family Studies found that couples who share religious activities together, such as praying or attending church, are less likely to divorce.

### 4. \*\*Global Perspective:

- Globally, divorce rates vary widely depending on cultural, legal, and religious contexts. In predominantly Christian countries with a strong cultural emphasis on marriage, such as Italy or Poland, divorce rates are lower than in more secular countries.

### **Key Point 1:** The Old Testament view of divorce

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." **Genesis 1:27**

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. **Genesis 2:24**

In the Old Testament, divorce was allowed under certain circumstances, such as adultery (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). However, divorce was never God's original intention for marriage.

A theological consideration of divorce using the original languages and the entire Bible (NIV) involves examining key passages to understand the broader biblical perspective. This exploration includes examining the Hebrew word “הַתְּרִישׁ” (divorce) from the Old Testament and the Greek term “ἀπολύω” (to send away, divorce) in the New Testament.

- **Deuteronomy 24:1-4: 24** If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house.

The Mosaic Law acknowledges the practice of divorce and provides regulations for it. In Hebrew, the term "כְּרִיתָת" (certificate) is used, reflecting a formal procedure. This suggests a legal structure around the concept of divorce, implying that it was recognized and regulated rather than outright prohibited.

- **Malachi 2:16:** Often cited as anti-divorce, “I hate divorce,” says the Lord, in Hebrew, is "שִׂנְאָתִי" (I hate). However, the context addresses the treachery in divorce, not the institution per se, emphasizing the importance of faithfulness and justice in relationships.

**Malachi 2:16** says, <sup>16</sup> “The man who hates and divorces his wife,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “does violence to the one he should protect,”<sup>[a]</sup> says the LORD Almighty. Divorce was not part of God's design for marriage, but because of the hardness of people's hearts, it was permitted.

## **Key Point 2: New Testament View on Divorce.**

Jesus's teaching on divorce

In the New Testament, Jesus addressed the issue of divorce in Matthew 19:3-9. He emphasized that God's original intention for marriage was for it to be a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (**Matthew 19:6**). He also made it clear that divorce should only be considered in cases of marital unfaithfulness.

### **Three levels of Adultery to Avoid:**

Physical Adultery  
Emotional Adultery  
Spiritual Adultery.

**Joseph the Father of Jesus and Divorce.** He was redirected by divine intervention.

Matthew 1:19-20 <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet<sup>Ⓜ</sup> did not want to expose her to public disgrace, **he had in mind to divorce her quietly.** <sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, **an angel of the Lord appeared to him** in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,<sup>Ⓜ</sup> because he will save his people from their sins."

**Matthew 19:3-9:** Jesus acknowledges Moses permitted divorce because of hard hearts but emphasizes that it wasn't God's original intention. However, He does make a provision for divorce in cases of marital unfaithfulness ("πορνεία," porneia in Greek).

**Mark 10:2-12** and **Luke 16:18** : Parallel passages to Matthew, emphasizing the permanence of marriage but, alongside Matthew, suggesting exceptions.

In **Mark 10:2-12**, Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees about divorce. He responds by stating that Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts, but from the beginning of creation, God intended for marriage to be a permanent union between a man and a woman. Jesus emphasizes that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

In **Luke 16:18**, Jesus speaks about divorce as well, highlighting that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Both **Mark 10:2-12** and **Luke 16:18** align with the passage in Matthew, which also stresses the sanctity and permanence of marriage. Although these passages uphold the general principle of the permanence of marriage, they suggest exceptions that may permit divorce in cases of adultery or marital unfaithfulness.

**1 Corinthians 7:10-16** Paul expands the discussion by providing that if an unbelieving partner leaves, the believing spouse is "not bound in such circumstances" (v. 15), indicating another situational allowance.

Theological Consideration:

- **Covenantal Context\*\***: Marriage is treated as a covenant reflecting God's relationship with His people. While ideally indissoluble, the Bible acknowledges human failure and provides mechanisms for mitigating continuous harm.
- **Divine Compassion\*\***: God's compassion (חֶסֶד, "chesed") and mercy throughout scripture suggest that He wouldn't desire individuals to remain in abusive or irreparably damaged relationships.
- **Justice Considerations\*\***: Biblical justice (צְדָקָה, "tsedeq") requires protecting the vulnerable, which can include permitting divorce in cases of abuse or abandonment.

### **Key Point 3:**

Providing pastoral care to divorced families and children

As Christians, we are called to provide support and care to those who have gone through divorce. This may include offering counseling, prayer, and emotional support. We can also help divorced families and children navigate the challenges that come with this experience and offer practical assistance when needed.

### **Call to Action:**

1. Offer a safe and compassionate space for divorced individuals and families to share their struggles and emotions.
2. Provide resources and referrals for counseling and support groups for those going through divorce.
3. Encourage church members to reach out and offer practical help to divorced families and children, such as meals, childcare, or assistance with household tasks.

### **Quote from a Church Father:**

"Marriage is not a human institution, but a covenant established by God. What God has joined together, let no one separate." – Augustine.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the Bible teaches us that marriage is a sacred covenant between a man and a woman, intended to be a lifelong commitment. While divorce may be permitted in certain circumstances, it is not God's original design for marriage. As Christians, we are called to provide support and care to those who have experienced divorce and to help them navigate the challenges that come with it.

Balancing the ideals of marriage with the realities of human shortcomings, the Bible offers a compassionate and just framework for accepting divorce, emphasizing protection, justice, and compassion for all parties involved.

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, we pray for those who have gone through the pain of divorce. May you comfort and heal their hearts and guide them in their journey towards healing and restoration. Help us, as a church, to offer love and support to those who are in need. Amen.

**Benediction:**

May the God of peace be with you, comforting you in times of sorrow and guiding you in times of need. May you find strength and hope in his love and be a beacon of light and compassion to those around you. Amen.

**Research Sources:**

These sources provide comprehensive and reputable data on marriage and divorce rates, offering insights into how religious affiliation and practice might influence marital stability.

- National Center for Family & Marriage Research (NCFMR): [ncfmr.bgsu.edu](https://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr.html)
- Pew Research Center: [pewforum.org](https://www.pewforum.org/)
- Barna Group Study on Divorce: [barnagroup.com](https://www.barna.com/)
- Institute for Family Studies: [ifstudies.org](https://ifstudies.org/)