

Law of Love – Marriage Divorce Covenant

****Bumper Video –**

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Welcome to the 3rd week of our Modern Family Series. Today is one of the biggest days in our series. I really want to help us all with the subject of Marriage & Divorce.

When God first dealt with me about becoming a Pastor the thing that freaked me out the most was the thought of divorce. It was painfully obvious to me that I didn't fully know what I believed... I had heard a bunch of different teaching over the years and much of it didn't agree with each other. So the thought of someone coming up and asking me about divorce and the grounds for divorce made me nauseous.

So a little less than a year ago I started studying this subject and what you hear today will come from that.

<Divorce Dilemma>

The divorce rate in the US is over 50%.

You've probably heard that 50% of Christian homes divorce... A deeper look shows different numbers...

60% of marriages that claim Christianity but rarely practice their faith or attend church end in divorce.

38% of marriages that actively attend some kind of Christian church and describe themselves as actively trying to live out faith end in divorce.

Those are better numbers but still not great. 38% is better than 50%, but still nothing to be happy about.

In America, there is one divorce every 13 seconds. That's 6,646 divorces per day, and 46,523 divorce per week.

The average length of a marriage that ends in divorce is eight years.

People wait an average of three years after a divorce to remarry (if they remarry at all). Upon remarriage the likelihood of them being divorced again is greater. The more you been divorced the more you will get divorced. Seems like a cruel and viscous cycle.

The average age for couples going through their first divorce is 30 years old.

The Fallout is... Fewer people are getting married, perhaps out of disillusionment. There is a growing feeling that marriage is just a piece of paper the state government gives you or that the only real benefit to marriage is the tax break.

The Modern family seems to be marked by divorce. Divorce almost seems inevitable in this modern culture.

<Marriage>

Mark 10:6-9 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' '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. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

The purpose of <Marriage> is a uniting of man to his wife. They are united to the point that they are one flesh.

Marriage is a covenant. Covenant is the most important idea in scripture. Everything God does towards us is out of a covenant understanding.

A covenant is a contract or agreement between two or more parties. The initiating party describes himself and what He has done and is willing to do, then there is a list of obligations between the two parties.

God's Covenant with Abraham. God introduces and describes himself to Abraham... God makes promises to Abraham (Father of many nations, blessed, give you the promised land) and Abraham makes promise towards God(He walks before him)

There is always a sign of Covenant. In the case of Abraham it is Circumcision

God's Grace Covenant towards us. God in flesh, Jesus introduces himself to his disciples and to us... He makes promises towards us and we make promise towards him.

The sign of covenant is communion

The Marriage Covenant of man and woman. You've heard the story... Boy meets girl, boy likes girl. Just like a covenant the initiating party describes themselves... we see this take place in courtship. The girl decides that the guy isn't a creeper and they walk together in agreement towards making a decision to be in covenant together.

THEY ARE NOT IN COVENANT TOGETHER WHILE DATING...

They are still introducing themselves to each other through dating/courtship.

When they decide to get married they are deciding to be with each other forever. During the marriage ceremony they will make public promise to each other. They exchange these VOWS...

I take you to be my wife (or husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy law, in the presence of God I make this vow.

What are they doing? They are covenanting together. Promising to each other. They are making an eternal promise.

The sign of the covenant is the consummation of marriage that takes place in the bedroom. In the eyes of God they are one flesh. They should live out there life acting like 1 person and not 2.

But this doesn't always happen. In our society this does not happen the majority of the time.

<Divorce happens> it shouldn't happen but it does.

The marriage covenant is a lifelong promise. The promise they are making isn't contingent upon external influences like sickness or health, a good economy or a bad economy, if they are sexually appealing or have put on some weight...

The promise they are making isn't based upon the actions of their betrothed. Your spouse will make better decisions and worse decisions... your covenant isn't based on that... you said for better or worse...

This covenant is a selfless covenant. Divorce is often selfish and full of vengeance. Nothing about these vows suggested that as long as it's a profitable situation you will stick around...

Your covenant isn't based on happiness. "I'm just not happy in this marriage anymore." I'm sorry about that, I really am. But don't you know that happiness fluctuates? Perhaps you should stick around and work on this marriage. Don't terminate your marriage because it hits a low point. Every marriage hits a low point!!

Your covenant isn't based on feeling. "I just don't feel the same about them." I'm sorry, but do you really want to make life decisions based on your feelings? If you live life based on your feelings you will do something different every single day. ... One night stands are based on feelings... **covenant is based on unconditional love.**

<Divorce happens... when we stop living by covenant.>

These marriage vows removed all condition... all that is left is to love and to cherish til death do us part. There is this beautiful picture that only death could separate us. Only the Lord calling our souls to heaven could separate us.

Are you living by covenant? Are you living as one flesh or two? Are you living by emotion? It's impossible for 2 people to live by one emotion. Adam & Eve were one flesh not one emotion. Are you living by a score board of grievances? That is doomed for failure and will undermine your one flesh

relationship. The Bible tells us Love keeps no record of wrongs...

Divorce shouldn't happen inside the Kingdom of God. We should understand covenant better than anyone and we should live according to our marriage covenant... yet Divorce does happen.

So we are going to talk about the controversial subject of divorce... specifically

Is divorce allowable in God's eyes?

Can I ever be remarried?

Luke 16:17 It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.(NIV)

Luke 16:18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.(NIV)

Uhoh... Jesus says – The Law is not going away... and then his next breath seems to damn the idea of divorcing and remarrying...

This scripture passage has led to some strange behavior...

There are some that have lived in a terrible abusive marriage because Jesus says they can never remarry... That if you remarry you are in adultery.

There are some people who have found a wonderful Christian partner but they can't take the step of marrying them because of a past divorce. It seems so cruel... but they feel like they would be causing themselves and this would be partner to live in sin.

There are some that wait around for their ex-spouse to die. If they die they figure it would then be ok to get remarried. If they don't die then they can never be ok to be remarried.

It gets stranger... If their ex-spouse doesn't get remarried maybe they will at least have sex with someone else... If they have sex with someone else then they are free to get remarried because they have grounds for divorce... their ex has committed adultery... Sometimes they are trying to play adultery chicken... let's see who flinches first...

Does this seem odd? Does this seem anything like the Kingdom of Jesus? PLEASE STICK WITH ME TODAY – Before today is over I want to give you a new, I believe true way to interpret this scripture.

Jesus said the Law is not going away. Jesus Christ didn't come to do away with the Law of the Old Testament. Preaching Grace isn't preaching lawlessness. The law is here to stay...

HOWEVER... Jesus claimed to fulfill the law.

Borrowing from last week's sermon on the Holy Spirit... The Spirit of Truth is now inside us causing us to live out Truth... to live out what the Law of God truly is.

{2 Corinthians 3:3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.(NIV)}

Paul reveals to us in 2 Corinthians 3:3 that the Law is no longer written on tablets of stone, but instead is written by the SPIRIT upon our hearts. The law is here to stay... It's not the law that has changed... IT IS US THAT HAS CHANGED... We have passed from death to life by the Spirit!!

The ultimate Covenant keeper is inside of us!

Romans 13:10 ...Love is the fulfillment of the law.

We no longer live by a to do list to fulfill the law... but we live according to the <Law of Love> and it fulfills all the requirements of the Law.

Jesus said a new commandment I give... Love God, love your neighbor...

{Luke 16:18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.(NIV)}

So Luke 16:18 says that divorcing and remarrying is adultery... How is that an example of how the law of love within our hearts fulfills the Old Testament law?

Here are 6 points I want to quickly share on the subject of divorce.

1. (Whatever Jesus means...) It's obvious that <God hates divorce.>

Malachi 2:16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel...(NIV)

a. Marriage is the only institution God gave man before the fall... It's foundational to EVERYTHING! Our Example of Jesus' love for us is marriage. Is Jesus' love for you important?

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her(NIV)

b. God hates divorce because He loves us... Your marriage is good for you! It will cause you to grow in grace, love, patience... He loves you. He hates divorce. If you are divorced it doesn't mean he hates you! It means you stepped away from something really good He had for you. Perhaps

you missed an opportunity for Him to work in your marriage? Often, just the process of working through our relationship will take us to a new level s in Christ.

c. Kingdom people – **<shut the divorce door.>** Work on your marriage. If 2 people are willing to work and forgive... God will create something beautiful. DON'T STAY THE SAME, STAGNANT SUFFERING, BUT WORK TOWARDS BETTER.

2. **<Sex creates a 1 Flesh reality>** that is never supposed to be broken Matt 19:5-6 WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER let no man separate. Sexual UNION/intimacy is the sign of the marriage covenant... circumcision of Israeli covenant, communion the sign of the Christian covenant.

a. GOD'S IDEAL IS THAT 1 PERSON UNION FOR LIFE. Any intercourse outside of the 1 flesh relationship is not God's ideal – therefore it is sin, it is adultery...

Definition of sin – It misses the Mark. **<Hamartia>**, the Greek word for sin means it misses the mark. God has a plan, a will, an ideal... and when we miss that mark it is sin.

Is divorce a sin? Yes it misses the mark of God's ideal. Sex outside of the 1 flesh relationship is sin... it misses the mark.

It doesn't matter how casual the sex was... a 1 flesh reality is created

Paul warns the men of Corinth of sleeping with prostitutes

1 Corinthians 6:16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."(NIV)

Sex creates a flesh relationship/connection.

Remember Jesus said that if you divorce and get remarried it is adultery....

Jesus' teaching on adultery actually applies to ALL who have ever had more than 1 sexual partner. It misses the mark and adulterates God's 1 flesh plan for you... The number of people this teaching applies to just went up...

More on that later...

3. <God has always been willing to accommodate his ideals to our fallen state>

a. God's plan – Monogamy. It's His ideal. Yet polygamy, halfway marriage – concubine was accepted by Him. As much as He wasn't for that situation it was better than women dying in poverty or being sold into slavery... so God allowed it.

b. God hates divorce... but He allows divorce as an accommodation to our fallen states/hardened hearts Matt 19:8. There is a reason for it...

- i. Written certificate... Slows down the process
- ii. Gives legal proof – allows her to remarry. A woman had very few options if she couldn't be remarried. This was actually a merciful act.s

4. <God honors the dissolution of divorce.>

- a. When the Old Testament woman divorced and then remarried they didn't drag her out and stone her... which they would do in the case of adultery. So the words of Jesus in Matthew about remarriage being adultery isn't about an escalation of sin & punishment but a realization of the Hamartia... how much we are missing the mark of God's ideal.
- b. There are people that think that God always sees you married to that first spouse. There have been people on their 2nd marriage but they are feeling guilty every day that God doesn't recognize their marriage... Every time they are with their current spouse they are committing adultery against their 1st spouse. There is one problem with this... the Bible doesn't say this.

If this were true... then to get back in the will of God would require divorcing your current spouse and going back to you original spouse.. or original personal you had sex with.

AWKWARD! What if you were raped? What if you had sex in 9th grade??? BUT.... God prohibits remarrying the person you

divorced... (Deuteronomy 24) How can that be if God always sees them married?

GOD WANTS A 1 FLESH RELATIONSHIP – but sometimes God doesn't get what He wants.

The Bible clearly says "What God joins together let no man separate" – that presupposes that they can in fact separate.

As much as he hates it, He allows divorce and he recognizes the dissolution of marriage.

5. <God hates divorce... but He hates some marriages more... >

Ezra 10:11 ...do His will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives."

Divorce your foreign wives. What!?! This has nothing to do with race... it has to do with a relationship that is drawing you away from God. God would rather you divorce than be drawn away from Him and end up in Hell.

God commits divorce...

Jeremiah 3:8 I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries.

Of course this is metaphorical. He wasn't killing the marriage... he was acknowledging that there was no marriage.

Israel claimed they had a covenant with Jehovah but their actions said otherwise.

A death certificate doesn't kill anyone... it just acknowledges that someone is dead. A divorce certificate doesn't kill the marriage... it acknowledges that there is no marriage.

If 2 people are willing! They won't just salvage the marriage they will make something beautiful – Covenant. But it takes 2! It takes both! If 1 or both aren't willing to work on the marriage but will remain married to keep up appearance... That doesn't honor God.

6. <Jesus holds up God's ideal to undermine self righteousness>

Matt 5:21-22 Jesus tells us being hateful and angry is the same as murder in your heart. Jesus is telling us to not be self righteous because we haven't physically killed someone... To be angry and insulting to someone still misses the mark... in fact it misses the mark as much as physical murder.

We've all murdered... so don't feel self righteous. Be aware what is in your mind heart & mouth and not just your actions. The Pharisees and most religious Christians today are focused only on the action and they feel righteous about it...

Jesus holds up God's ideal Matt 5:27-28 when he says if we lust we have committed adultery in our heart. So wait a minute... let's set this straight...

If you divorce and remarry you miss the mark and commit adultery...

But don't feel self righteous if that doesn't describe you... because if you have had sex with someone other than your 1 flesh relationship you commit adultery....

But don't feel self righteous if that doesn't describe you... because if you have ever lusted in your heart you have committed adultery. Jesus is holding up God's Ideal Reality and when we stand in His presence none of us should be self righteous.

Again... Jesus is not escalating the punishment of the Law... He is showing us how much we have all missed the mark... Murder and adultery are punishable by death in Jewish law... Jesus isn't marching us out to be stoned to death... he is pointing out our sin. All of us sin... miss the mark in these areas. Jesus is holding up God's ideal.

He is calling us to the <Law of Love>

This scripture about remarrying being adultery has confused the issue greatly... Here is the REAL ISSUE.

The Pharisees were arguing over the grounds of divorce... the technicalities, the loop hole, what would be legally ok to God.

When people want to talk about divorce they usually come with the same motivation. They want to feel validated for wanting to get divorced. They usually throw out a list of grievances that their spouse has done...

Jesus points these Pharisees towards the real problem – Their heart.

Matthew 19:8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard."

The real problem with divorce... the root cause is not what your spouse has or hasn't done... it is your heart being hard.

Stop looking for loop holes in covenant... submit to perfect love. Stop attacking your spouse with a self righteous heart...

You can't feel righteous about not committing murder when you have hate in your heart

You can't feel righteous about not committing Adultery when you lust in your heart

You can't feel righteous about Divorce because it reflects the hardness of your heart.

Purge your heart from the hardness of heart that is divorce.
The law of love is a higher law than the law of external
behavior

Married people – Guard your hearts

Remarriage misses the mark... it is a sin...

Jesus is not revoking the old testament permission

1. Married couples should fight like heaven for your marriage – God Hates Divorce. God is willing to fight for your marriage.
2. God truly honors and blesses remarriages
 - a. It's not God's ideal... but God is willing to accommodate your situation
3. People who are now single because of divorce are not shut out from the possibility of remarriage.

We are about to open this altar but before we do I want to share a personal story...

Outside my relationship with Jesus, nothing has grown me more as a person than my relationship with my wife. It has lifted a mirror up and shown me how I really am and not I think I am...

My wife has shown me grace and unconditional love as we have tried to live out covenant.

One day we were at home getting ready for a connect group meeting. This actually takes place before we were married... We get into a heated argument... (Not sure what it was about now...)

I shut down in my normal moody, defensive passive aggressive way....

Even when I was driving her away... She didn't drive away. That is covenant. That is grace. That is love.