

Marriage Adultery and Children
Matthew 19:9—22

It was never God's intention to have a marriage dissolve in divorce. I believe if Adam had not sinned that he would still be married to Eve. Divorce only became necessary after man had sinned and God in His mercy granted a way for a married couple to break their union. According to verse 8 it was not possible to divorce from the beginning but at least by the time the Mosaic Law was given the permission to divorce was also granted.

Most fundamental people interpret Matthew 19 along with Deuteronomy 24 and 1 Corinthians 7 to say that once divorced you must not remarry except for reason of adultery on the part of the spouse. They understand the Greek word “ἀπολύω” (Strong's Number g630) to mean divorce. However, when not relating to a husband/wife relationship the word means to separate or leave. For instance in Matthew 15:39 Jesus sent the crowd away, in Matthew 18:27 the servant was loosed and in Acts 28:25 the people departed. The word most often interpreted divorce should more accurately be interpreted as departed or sent away. Matthew 5:31 and Jeremiah 3:8 make the distinction between being sent away and being divorced.

Matthew 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

Having said this, I leave open the possibility that being put away or sent away (as in Matthew 19:7) or leaving her husband (as in 1 Corinthians 7:10) contains the idea of divorce. This is something that each person considering remarriage after a divorce must prayerfully consider and come to terms with.

Committing adultery (verse 9)

When the Pharisees came up to Jesus with a question about marriage and divorce they did so only to test Him and trip Him up. They were hoping to make Him look foolish in the people's eyes by pitting what was said in Genesis with what Moses wrote in the Law. Genesis did not allow for divorce and assumed that marriage would be for the life of the partners. Moses now furnishes a “loophole” in allowing for divorce. Jesus turns the questions back to the Pharisees stating that the only reason the Law allowed divorce was because of the hardness of YOUR hearts. It seems obvious that they were abusing their ability to divorce and thus cheapening the institution of marriage. God granted divorce to Israel as a tool to be used sparingly in the case of an awful union, not because the wife burned the manna.

Jesus then states that anyone who puts away his wife and marries another woman commits adultery. Most people and most translations interpret this to mean divorce. Strictly speaking, the wife is put away but not divorced. Since marriage is taking place without a divorce those who remarry without officially divorcing are the one who are in an adulteress relationship.

The eunuchs (verses 10—12)

The disciples are thinking that it may not be good to marry if marriage can lead to all these problems. Jesus tells them that marriage is not necessarily good for every person. Some people are born in a position of desiring to remain single. Some have never been given the opportunity to marry and others remain single in order to serve the Lord.

The term eunuch is normally understood to mean sterile male but according to Vines Expository Dictionary it can also refer to one who is naturally incapacitated for marriage and one who voluntarily abstains from marriage. Jesus' use of the word in this passage is closely related to the topic of marriage as He explains to the Disciples that there are various reasons for a person not to be married.

Paul supports this last example for not being married. He taught it was best to not be married since marriage redirects your attention from God to your spouse (1 Corinthians 7:32—35). He also emphasizes that there is absolutely nothing wrong to seek to be married.

Little Children (verses 13—15)

As Jesus was teaching, some little children were brought to Jesus so He could lay His hands on them and pray. The Disciples were watching over Him and helping Him with ministry and saw that these children were seemingly distracting Jesus from His ministry with the people. They didn't understand how important children were in Jesus' eyes. All day long He would deal with people who were trying to sabotage his ministry. These little children accepted Jesus at face value and would accept what He taught them without an argument. This was a teaching moment for the Disciples to show them that the rest of Israel needed to come to Him with the faith of a child. This does not mean that we should have a child-like faith because our faith should be a mature faith. It does mean that we need to be humble as a child in the things of the Lord. The children who came to Jesus were trusting and accepting of Him. Christ was looking for this kind of faith throughout Israel since these kinds of people will inherit the Kingdom.

In contrast to these children were the Pharisees. They came to Jesus in arrogance and pride. They trust in their own form of righteousness instead of humbling themselves and accepting Christ as Messiah.

Rich young ruler (verses 16—22)

It's no mistake that this story follows the account of the little children. This young man is a counter example of how men should come to Christ.

He runs up to Jesus, addresses Him as Good Master then asks Him what good thing he has to do to inherit eternal life. It's interesting that Jesus points out to the man that there is none good except God. By doing this He was subtly declaring Himself to be God. His question to Jesus indicates he was in line with the Pharisees in practicing self-righteousness. He thought that doing good works was the way into the Kingdom and eternal life.

Jesus lists six of the 10 commandments (From Mark 10:19): do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud and honor your father and mother. Notice how all these commandments relate to man's relationship with other men. This man was confident that he had obeyed every one of these commandments without fail. Jesus knew this wasn't true and told him to sell all his possessions and give them to the poor. It can be inferred from this conversation that this man became rich by taking advantage of the poor and that Jesus used this to show the man that he wasn't guiltless in how he treated others. Mark 10:21 makes it clear the Jesus didn't do this to put this man down but did it out of love for him. Jesus wanted this man to be like the Disciples, sell all and follow Him.

It's telling to see what commandments Jesus did not bring up: to have no other gods, don't make any idols, don't take the name of God in vain and to remember the Sabbath. All these commandments relate to the relationship between God and man. I believe God did not ask him about keeping these commandments because the man was guilty of breaking all of these regularly. Jesus pointed out areas where the man thought he was righteous and blameless but was actually guilty and not worthy of eternal life.

Many today do as this man had done in weighing their own righteousness and thinking that doing enough good works will earn them eternal life. They do this by first defining what they think God will like and then proceed to do those works that they have self-defined. The true way for eternal life is through faith. Israel needed to believe in their Messiah and then demonstrate their faith through works. The book of James connects faith and works for Israel. We in the Body of Christ are told to believe in the person of Jesus Christ and in His death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1—4). Any good works we do should be done because we are saved and not to prove we are. Believers in Israel were commanded to do good works to demonstrate their faith while we are told to add nothing to our faith (Romans 3:27—28).

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