

Matthew 19:1-15 | “The Value of Marriage & Children”
Preached on February 4, 2024 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Matthew 19, verse 1.

We will be covering verses 1-15, as we look at the topic of marriage and children. *[pauseeee]*

Without a doubt, marriage and family are being twisted, trivialized, and made little in our society.

From so-called same-sex marriage, to the destruction of children in the womb, to rampant divorce -- marriage and children have been devalued. *[pauseeeee]*

You can't get around this fact, for it's clear from what's happening all around us. *[pause]*

Let's start with marriage...

They say that about half of all marriages end in divorce.

And what are the main reasons?

According to one study, two out of the top three reasons for divorce were a lack of commitment and too much conflict.¹

And Gallup polling found that a staggering 81% of people said that divorce was morally acceptable.² *[pauseeee]*

That in itself is bad enough to show a devaluing of the marriage bond, but you add onto that the fact that 61% of Americans view the legalization of same-sex marriage as good for society.³
[pauseeee]

This combination of divorce and same-sex marriage is utterly twisting and corrupting God's design for marriage.

In fact, there is a growing industry that actually *celebrates* divorce by providing things to have a “divorce party”. *[pause]*

Something to mourn over has been flipped into something to be celebrated, paving the way for your “fresh start” and “happiness”.⁴ *[pauseeee]*

Obviously, there is something going on with our culture's view of marriage and family...

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4012696/>.

² <https://news.gallup.com/poll/393515/americans-say-birth-control-divorce-morally-acceptable.aspx>.

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/11/15/about-six-in-ten-americans-say-legalization-of-same-sex-marriage-is-good-for-society/>.

⁴ See <https://www.instagram.com/freshstartsregistry> for the idea that divorce merely provides a “fresh start”.

For *Pew Research* has found that, “In 1970, 67% of Americans ages 25 to 49 were living with their spouse and one or more children younger than 18.”

In 2021, that number has dropped to only 37%.⁵ [pauseeeee]

But it’s not only marriage that is devalued -- so are children. [pause]

The clearest indication of this is the prevalence of abortion, where children are seen as dispensable, if you don’t want them.

But there’s a growing consensus that the childless life is better and brings you more joy. [pauseeee]

TIME magazine ran a cover story in 2013, which said on the front page, “The Childfree Life: When having it all means not having children.”⁶ [pause]

In it, one woman described her childfree life as fulfilling, for she liked the way her life was.

Another pointed to all the things she could do like “buy unnecessary beautiful object[s]” and “sleep in”.

And another woman called child-rearing, “glamorous martyrdom”. [pauseeeee]

This thinking has lamentably infiltrated the Christians ranks, too.

In that *TIME* article, one woman who grew up going up to church says that having kids means trading her freedom away, and sees the church as “oppressively family-centric”. [pauseeeee]

The value of marriage and family has been replaced with the value of “we can do anything we want, so why wouldn’t we?”⁷ [pauseeee]

Amidst all of these changing norms and thoughts about marriage and family - as Christians, we *must* fall back upon, “What does Christ say?” [pause]

It doesn’t matter what we feel, what we see, or what our culture is doing - it matters what Christ says about marriage and children. [pause]

We are followers of Him, our Lord.

We are not our own lords and our culture is definitely not our lord, but we have a Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵ <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/09/14/the-modern-american-family/>.

⁶ <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,2148636,00.html>.

⁷ A quote from the *TIME* article above.

And this morning, we will read what He says about marriage and children, reminding ourselves that what He says is truth, for He is “the truth”⁸. *[pause]*

Let’s begin by READING, starting in verse 1. *[READ 1-12]*

The first point that I want you to see from this text is that...

I. Marriage is valued by the Lord and should not be trivialized. (1-12)

The good ol’ Pharisees, with their hearts filled with hate towards Jesus, come to “test” Him. *[pause]*

They want Him to mess up, make people angry, and go against the Law when it comes to the topic of divorce.

But little do they realize they are going up against the Son of God Himself, who knows the topic of marriage inside and out, for He created it. *[pauseeee]*

In their first question and answer with Jesus on this topic, they ask, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” *[pauseeee]*

You see, at this time there were two Rabbinic schools of thought about divorce.

One said you can divorce for any reason, and the other said that you could do it only for sexual immorality.

And so the Pharisees are trying to throw Jesus into the debate of the day. *[pause]*

But how does He answer?

In typical Jesus fashion, He answers in an unexpected way.

Instead of directly answering their question, He points them back to God’s original purpose and design for marriage: man and woman for life. *[pauseeee]*

He sort of takes a shot at them by saying, “Have you not read...?”

It’s like He’s saying, “Don’t you know your Scriptures? Don’t you know the foundational Creation account and institution of marriage?” *[pauseeee]*

God created male and female, and the two join together to become one flesh, so how could we think it’s good to separate them?

And since God has actually brought them together, then “what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” *[pauseeee]*

⁸ John 14:6.

The Pharisees are thinking, “What are the reasons we can divorce?”

And Jesus is replying with, “Well how did God set things up? He set it up to be a man and a woman together for life.” *[pauseee]*

This reminds us that we must always point back to God’s design for marriage when it comes to the topics of divorce or same-sex marriage.

God created marriage to be a certain way, and to distort what He has created is wrong. *[pauseeee]*

You see, what the Pharisees were doing was that they were basically looking for what ways you can get out of marriage.

And Jesus does something interesting, He is really saying, “Don’t go looking for reasons to get out of a marriage, look to stay in it for life, according to God’s purpose.” *[pauseeeee]*

Many people don’t think this way when it comes to marriage.

When times get tough in marriage, people look for the reasons why they can and should get out of the marriage.

But really, we should be looking to stay *in* marriage. *[pause]*

Our goal should always be, “How can we make this work? How can we work through this together?”

That’s what Jesus is emphasizing: remember God’s design and pursue that! *[pauseeee]*

This means that in our marriages, we should keep going back to what marriage is and what marriage was meant to be.

Marriage is the coming together of two people to be “one flesh”.

And one flesh isn’t meant to be torn apart, but kept together, for it is like you and your spouse are glued together.⁹ *[pause]*

But also, God has created marriage to be life-long, and has *brought* you two together. *[pauseeee]*

What if we always kept these things on the front of our minds, especially when we were going through rough patches?

This is God’s design, and as Christians, we should always, always, always lift up God’s design and ideal, for it’s God’s will. *[pauseeee]*

Now Jesus’ answer leads to a second question and answer between him and the Pharisees.

⁹ The word translated as “hold fast” in Genesis 2:24 is the idea of being “glued together”.

Their thinking is that, “If marriage is man and woman for life, then what about what Moses commanded about giving a certificate of divorce in the Law?” *[pause]*

The Pharisees are probably licking their lips, for they are probably thinking, “Could this be the thing that trips Jesus up, for how could He go against the Law?”

But Jesus points out that what Moses said was not a commandment, it was an allowance, due to their hardness of heart. *[pause]*

Essentially, a concession was made due to sin, so it’s not like divorce is the original plan or a good thing.

Rather, it’s a sad reality in a fallen world. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus is showing us that we must think rightly about what Moses said.

The permitted instance of divorce when sexual immorality happens is NOT a command, and we should never see it that way.

Rather, it is something merely *permitted* because of our sin. *[pauseeee]*

So that means we must never exploit or rejoice in this permitted exception.

And to view divorce due to sexual immorality as a command, or even as something you are “supposed to do” is to commit the same error as the Pharisees. *[pauseeee]*

If in marriage, your spouse commits sexual immorality, you are not commanded nor instructed to divorce, *you are permitted*.

There’s a big difference. *[pauseeee]*

I’m not unaware of the pain and hurt involved for those in that type of situation.

I can’t imagine the hurt and pain you would go through finding out that your spouse was unfaithful to you...

...But remember that though you are permitted to divorce, you are not commanded or instructed to do so. *[pause]*

In fact, I’ve seen a couple go through this very thing.

The husband was unfaithful to his wife, and it was ugly and painful. *[pause]*

I cannot even imagine what the wife went through when she learned this.

But only because of the strength that God provided, the wife decided to stay with her husband amidst all of it. *[pause]*

Of course, the husband was repentant and had to rebuild her trust over time, but now they are happily married, and what an amazing testimony to the grace of God and the beauty of forgiveness and reconciliation. *[pauseeee]*

If you notice, Jesus kept going back to the original intent and design of God for marriage, for even here he said, “but from the beginning it was not so.” *[pauseeee]*

Jesus doesn't go to our feelings about marriage, or culture's view of marriage as the basis of truth, but He goes back to the original design of God.

And that must be our focus when it comes to marriage: the original intent and design. *[pauseeee]*

We don't go into marriage thinking, “Oh, it's fine. If they are unfaithful, I'll just divorce and move on with life.”

No, we are not to view marriage in such a flippant way.

Instead, we go into marriage with a mindset of committing to it for life.

But know that due to sin, there may be a permitted time to divorce due to sexual immorality, but this isn't done with joy or relief, but with tears, knowing that it's not according to God's intended design. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus holds up God's design of marriage, and shows us that divorce for any reason is wrong, except for sexual immorality, but even that is a concession.

For He makes it clear when He says, “I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” *[pauseeee]*

Jesus is teaching us that to divorce and then remarry outside of the permitted reason is to commit adultery because God still views you as married to the original person. *[pause]*

So no matter what the state says about your marriage, if you divorce and remarry outside of the permitted reason, you commit adultery. *[pause]*

Now Paul adds abandonment by an unbeliever in 1 Corinthians¹⁰ also, but God is clear about marriage.

Marriage is to be lifelong, and we should not be looking for reasons *out*, but looking for the help of God to remain faithfully *in*. *[pauseeee]*

Now this is hard, and that's why the disciples say in verse 10, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” *[pauseeee]*

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:15.

Marriage is hard, and anyone who tells you otherwise either isn't married or they are lying.
[pause]

You are coming together as two sinners, and there's going to be hardship and conflict.

Expectations are not met, you sin against each other, and you often come with different mindsets towards things. *[pause]*

The disciples saw Jesus' restrictions on divorce as so hard that they felt like they couldn't do it!

This is His disciples who say this!

Yet, this is what we are called to, and the grace of God empowers us to follow Him faithfully.
[pauseeee]

Now I know there are some listening today who have been through a divorce, or have a close family member or friend who has gone through it.

Let me speak to you this morning. *[pause]*

I know that for most of you this brings up a lot of bad memories, and you may even feel guilt and shame right now thinking about all of this. *[pauseeee]*

Some of you did not want to get divorced.

You tried your hardest to stay together, and if it was up to you, you would still be married, but the other person went ahead with it. *[pause]*

I'm sorry for you, you desired to follow God's ideal, but your spouse did not.

Rest in the arms of the Father, knowing that He cares for you, even amid the brokenness of your marriage. *[pauseeee]*

I know that there are some here who have been divorced due to the permitted reason of sexual immorality of your spouse, or the abandonment by an unbeliever.

The pain you must have felt and may still feel must be so hard.

But know that God can bring healing to your heart -- run to Him! *[pauseeee]*

And I know that there are some here who have been divorced and even remarried, and it's outside of the permitted reasons. *[pause]*

For some of you, this all happened before you were even saved, or for others, it may not have been. *[pause]*

If you haven't already, repent of what happened, and yet know this - there is forgiveness for you.

God's grace can cover any sin, you are not outside the reach of God's love and forgiveness.

[pause]

You are not a lost cause, you are not irreparably damaged, but God loves you so much that He sent His only Son to die on the Cross for even what you did in the past. *[pause]*

Jesus hung on the Cross, took your sins upon Himself, and said, "It is finished!"¹¹ *[pause]*

So if you have placed your faith in Him, He sees Christ's perfect righteousness on your account, and not your sin.

As Scripture says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."¹²

And, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died."¹³

So lay at His feet, cling to Him in faith, and look up to Christ, who died for you. *[pauseeeee]*

Now let's go back to what the disciples said in verse 10 about it being better to be single. *[pause]*

They are thinking that because of the possibility of being stuck in a marriage you don't want to be in, it's better to be single.

But Jesus corrects their thinking, by explaining that not everyone can just go without being married. *[pause]*

The truth is that for the majority of people, they long for and find fulfillment in marriage, and for them, singleness feels like an impossibility.

That's why He says, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given."

[pauseeee]

Each of us is different.

I know for me, before I got married, I longed for marriage, and not being married felt like an impossibility when I thought about the rest of my life.

But there are others who actually desire singleness or are satisfied with being single, and it's because God has given them this gift, empowering them for this. *[pauseeeee]*

This actually shows us that though marriage may be the norm for most people, Jesus sees singleness as just as valuable, for singleness is a gift from God. *[pause]*

It's not a "lesser-than" status, but merely a different one.

¹¹ John 19:30.

¹² Romans 8:1.

¹³ Romans 8:33-34.

As Paul says when talking about this subject, “each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.”¹⁴ *[pauseeeee]*

Many people look down upon singleness, or don’t see it as a good thing, yet Jesus shows us that it’s actually a gift from God for some people.

Some are born eunuchs, some are made that way by men, and others choose to remain single to devote their time and effort towards the Kingdom. *[pauseeeee]*

So married people: do not look down on those who are single, acting like they are weird for choosing to be single and devoting their time to God.

If you do so, you are going against something that God sees as precious, and something that God has gifted them for. *[pauseeee]*

And single people, if you are content in singleness or desire to be single, know that you are not “lesser than” married people.

Think of the time you can invest in Kingdom work for God! *[pause]*

So if you are able to be single, great! But if not, then realize that that’s good, too. *[pauseeeee]*

Marriage and singleness are both valuable to the Lord, so let’s view them as valuable, each in its place.

And let’s remember the value of marriage and how God designed it by not trivializing it. *[pause]*

Let’s not devalue it by divorce, but let’s pursue marriage as it was created by God, man and woman for life. *[pause]*

It won’t be easy, as the world or even some friends may try to pressure you to just leave.

It won’t be easy, as you are two sinners brought together and that means there will be times of sin, pain, and hurt. *[pause]*

You will face conflict and hardship together, and you will enjoy wonderful times of closeness together...

...But think of the beauty of remaining faithful together through it all.

For a couple who has been through everything together, the highest of highs and the lowest of lows will be able to at the end of their lives point upward and say, “Only by the grace of God.” *[pauseeeee]*

Let’s value marriage like Christ. *[pause]*

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 7:7.

But it's not only marriage that Christ views highly here in our passage, for verses 13-15 show us that...

II. Children are valued by the Lord and should not be disregarded. (13-15)

I'll READ those verses for you. [*READ*]

Here are these children being brought to be blessed by Jesus, and the disciples are trying to stop them. [*pause*]

It seems as though the disciples may have thought that the children had no right to Jesus' attention or that He had more important things to do and people to see.

But no matter what it was, they were trying to hinder the children from getting to Jesus.

Yet Jesus stands up for them, and tells his disciples to leave the children alone and not to prevent them from coming. [*pauseeee*]

In this small incident, there is a big gap between the disciples' view of children and Jesus'. [*pause*]

The disciples saw the children as nuisances or problems to be moved out of the way for the more important people and things.

But Jesus saw the children are precious, and as ones who should be given time and attention.

And He shares once again how children reflect the kind of people that we ought to be as disciples, dependent and humble. [*pauseeeee*]

You know, our world in some ways does not value children.

When children are in the womb, they are seen as something that can be received or thrown away, depending on what you want.

Children in the womb are only deemed valuable, if they do not get in the way of *your* dreams and happiness. [*pause*]

Isn't that a horrific view of children?

It sees them as inconveniences and problems to get moved out of the way for the more important things.

But we should value children like Christ. [*pauseeee*]

Now I'm not oblivious to the fact that there may be people in this room, or people listening on the radio, who have had an abortion.

If that is you, please know that there is forgiveness available for you, too.

God's grace extends even you, so simply confess your sin and reach out in faith for the forgiveness of Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Our value of children shouldn't only reach into the womb, but should reach out to children in the foster care system.

Do we value them, too?

What could we do for them that shows we value them and want them to know Jesus? *[pauseeee]*

Our value of children should be seen in how we treat children who are here in church.

Do we see them as a nuisance, annoyance, or distraction?

Or do we burst with joy seeing them, and thinking, "This is the best place for them. Let's bring them to Christ by teaching about Him and demonstrating His character to them." *[pause]*

I'm thankful for a church that embraces my children, and sees them as joy and not a burden, amidst all of their energy and noise.

Let's keep that going. *[pauseeee]*

And our value of children should be seen in our view of having children. *[pause]*

For those who are married and are able to have children, our priority shouldn't be money, career, and fun at the expense of having children.

Rather, children are to be seen as a gift from God.¹⁵

They are not a burden, holding us back from true joy, but they are a joy and a blessing, so may our mindsets reflect that reality. *[pauseeee]*

Children are valuable to Christ, and they should be valuable to us, too. *[pause]*

Children are not to be viewed as irritants, headaches, or inconveniences.

They are not "less than" adults, or not as important.

Rather, as the children here wanted to go to Jesus, may we all reflect that in our own lives, desiring to be near Him - knowing that to be near to Christ, that's where blessing is found. *[pauseeee]*

Jesus reveals to us the truth behind marriage and children here and how we should view them.

So...

Align your view of marriage and children with the Lord's!

¹⁵ See Psalm 127:3-5.

The Lord's view of marriage & children is not an opinion, it is the truth, coming from the source of all truth.

So that means that Christians *must* value marriage and children, no matter how much flak we get from the world around us. *[pauseee]*

Valuing marriage and family is not just something we do with our words and stances, but with our actions and lives.

We don't trivialize marriage by pursuing divorce for unpermitted reasons, but we pursue God's original intention of man and woman for life. *[pause]*

We don't just ride out our marriages, seeking to stay together just to say that we did it, but we seek to have godly, gracious marriages, holding them up for the world to see. *[pause]*

And we don't distort marriage by allowing or affirming so-called same-sex marriage, but we point to God's good design for marriage. *[pauseeee]*

When it comes to children, we are not to be carried along with the culture's view of children.

Rather, we are to show that we value children from the womb to adulthood.

They aren't irritants, but image-bearers of God.

We try to protect them in the womb, but not only that, we are also to be the first ones in line to care for children in need.

And we value them enough to bring them to Jesus and show them that He is what they need. *[pauseeee]*

The Lord values marriage and children, do you have the same mindset? *[pauseee]*

We don't pridefully look down on others, for we remember that that's how we were before Christ, yet the grace of God invaded our lives and changed us.

So there's no boasting, but only rejoicing in the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. *[pause]*

And as He redeemed our souls on the Cross, so He can redeem our messed up marriages, and our wrong views of children.

He can turn what's broken into something beautiful.

He can turn what's messed up into something marvelous.

So let's look to Christ through it all.