

The Permanence of Marriage

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 10, verses 1 to 12. This is God's word. Jesus then left that place and went into a region of Judea across the Jordan.

Again, the crowds came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

What did Moses command you? he replied. They said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law, Jesus replied.

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. When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.

[1 : 13] He answered, Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.

God's creation institution of marriage came from his heart of love. And it is the God-given building block of all society.

As goes marriage, so goes the family. So goes the church. So goes the nation. Now it's a sad fact that in our nation that almost half of all marriages end in divorce.

But even sadder still is the fact that the divorce rate among those who profess themselves to be evangelical Christians is really no better than the world. So husbands and wives, how important is your marriage to God?

How important is it to you? How much are you investing in it on a daily and a weekly basis?

Working on your marriage should be a lifelong, never-ending thing.

[2 : 34] The Bible tells us that marriage is God's good idea. It also tells us that sin is the curse of God's good idea of marriage.

And that our only hope is that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer from sin. And in redeeming us from sin, He redeems marriage itself.

Now, no-fault divorce has made divorce an acceptable way to get out of an unhappy marriage. And the more that the world around us accepts what God forbids, the more we need to be reminded of God's will concerning marriage.

And so to be armed with truth and grace, lest the world squeeze us into its mold, rather than holding the mold of God's mind in Scripture.

And so we've come this morning in our study of Mark's Gospel to hear our Savior's words and have our minds renewed concerning the permanence of marriage as God intended from creation.

[3 : 43] We find that Jesus' Galilean ministry in the north has come to an end. He's now making His final journey down to Jerusalem, where He has an appointment to drink the cup of God's wrath on behalf of His people.

Luke records these words at this point in His ministry. As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

He was a man on a mission. This is why He came. And when that time appointed was near, He set His face as a flint for Jerusalem, and nothing would deter Him.

He was going to do the Father's will. He was going to accomplish the salvation of a multitude of sinners that no man can number. Yet on the way, He still takes time to teach the multitudes.

We read in verse 1, When Jesus then left that place, that's Capernaum up in Galilee, and He went into the region of Judea, and across the Jordan, again, crowds of people came to Him, and as was His custom, He taught them.

[4 : 59] People need to know about their biggest problem, the problem of sin. People need to know that it's taking them to an everlasting hell.

They need to know of God's only way of salvation in Jesus Christ. And so Jesus is teaching them, and teaching them as His habit was, His custom.

This is the way He was. Was there a crowd? He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. And He's come as the good shepherd to guide them into the path of peace with God.

His ministry was that of teaching. And He has given that teaching ministry to His church to carry it on now that He is in heaven.

He did that in the Great Commission. His last words as He spoke to the church through the representatives of the apostles, telling us to go into all the world to make disciples.

[5 : 57] And then what are we to do? We're to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And then we're to teach them to do whatever all that Christ has commanded.

So the church has this ongoing teaching ministry that our Lord Jesus Himself came and did. And that's because of this assignment.

That's the reason that the Bible is central in our life as a church, in our worship as a church. So Jesus sees a crowd, and He begins to teach them.

And wherever a crowd gathered, His carping critics were sure to show up. And sure enough, here they are again. We read in verse 2, These people had not come to be taught by Jesus, but came with hostile intent to trick Him into saying something that would turn the people against Him.

Now in the hearing of God's Word, the attitude of your heart is everything. Do you come humbly, placing yourself under the Word of God to have Jesus teach you?

[7 : 23] Is that why you're here today? You're humbly coming to learn from Jesus. Or are you standing in judgment against what the Scripture says to see if it fits your ideas?

And if it fits in with what you think and like, then you'll accept it. You see, attitude of our heart is everything in hearing the Word. Now these Pharisees, they come with a heart that's full of envy. They are envious of the popularity of Jesus among the masses. And so their question is meant to alienate the crowd from Jesus. Just as Paul in our Scripture reading says that there are some people trying to alienate you Galatians from me, a preacher of the Gospel.

Well, the Pharisees had already heard Jesus' strict views against divorce. You can read it back in Matthew 5 in his Sermon on the Mount. And they knew that it would not be popular with the masses.

So they asked Jesus, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? J.C. Ryle says, it is plain that the prevailing opinions of the Jews upon this subject when our Lord was upon the earth were lax and low in the extreme.

[8 : 46] The binding character of the marriage tie was not recognized. Divorce for slight and trivial causes was allowable and common.

We're not surprised when it's allowable that it becomes common, are we? Even Rabbi Hillel taught if the wife cooks her husband's food poorly by over-salting it or over-roasting it, she's to be put away, divorced.

Rabbi Akiba said, a man may divorce his wife if he found another fairer than her. And so the popular grounds for divorce were almost for any and every reason.

No fault, divorce. Does it sound familiar? We complain about how things are bad today. If only we could get back to the good old days.

These are the good old days. They were just as bad as today with regard to divorce, is what we find. And so the Pharisees think that they've got Jesus in a corner and he's going to shoot himself in the foot if he tells the people that he's against divorce.

[9 : 58] Well, Jesus wasn't one to get a sense of which way the wind of popular opinion was blowing. He wasn't one who developed his positions on truth by surveying the crowd.

No, for him the issue was not what do the people want, but what does God's word say? It's just that simple to Jesus. He ignores the will of the people and the opinions of the various rabbis and teachers of Israel.

And instead he replies, what did Moses command you? Well, he's appealing to God's word that was mediated through Moses.

And they said, verse 4, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. Notice they do not turn to what God commanded, but to what God permitted or allowed.

They're referring to the civil law given to Israel in Deuteronomy 24 that had permitted divorce. And so in verse 5, Jesus replied, it was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law. [11:23] You see, divorce in Deuteronomy 24 was not commanded. It was merely permitted. And Jesus says it was only permitted because your hearts were so hard and rebellious against God's original command for marriage that he made clear from the very beginning of creation.

Deuteronomy 24 stood as a witness to their stubborn unwillingness to submit to God's way of marriage. And this civil law was added as the way that the nation could regulate and limit divorce among their ranks.

And mainly for the protection of the wife who could easily be taken advantage of by the men. So it became the lesser of two evils.

Regulated divorce was better than unregulated divorce. Regulated divorce was better than marriage with open adultery going on in the midst of the marriage.

Regulated divorce was better than wives being abused, deserted, or even murdered to get rid of them. It was a concession to rein in man's evil desires and to rein in the abuse of women to keep sin in check.

[12:49] And so the demand for a formal certificate found there in Deuteronomy 24 meant that the woman was thereby publicly released from her marriage covenant and thereby enabled to remarry.

Without that certificate, how would anyone know that she had been divorced? But there was the restriction in Deuteronomy 24 that man, you better think twice before ditching her because if she marries another man and he divorces her and you come to your senses and see that she wasn't that bad after all, you can't remarry her.

So again, these were limitations being put on divorce for the sake of restricting sin in the nation of Israel.

William Lane comments, Deuteronomy 24 was not to make divorce acceptable, but to limit sinfulness and to control its consequences.

And so the Pharisees were misusing the Scripture. They were misusing Deuteronomy 24 as if that meant divorce is acceptable with God. They had the back door of marriage wide open with the divorce card.

[14:11] But it was, in no way, Deuteronomy 24, in no way set aside God's design for marriage. It was only permitted to their shame showing how far they had fallen from God's revealed will and plan.

So the rabbis would debate among themselves under what condition the man might divorce her according to Deuteronomy 24.

What did God mean there by something in her that was displeasing to Him? But God clearly commanded back at creation His will regarding marriage.

And that's what Jesus says in verses 25 through 7. He says, it was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law. But, there's an important but, many of them in the Scriptures.

Here's another one. But, at the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. And for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.

[15:17] And the two will become one flesh. He's saying, let's go back to first principles. Let's go back to the original intention of marriage as it came from the hand of its inventor, God the Creator.

Because Deuteronomy 24 in no way negated God's Word in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Jesus shows, or would say to them, you're asking the wrong question.

You're asking, how can I get out of a difficult marriage? When the real question to be asking is, what is God's original design for marriage and how can I keep it?

How can I fulfill that? That's where Jesus goes back to the beginning, back to creation, where God established His will concerning marriage. And Jesus is saying, this is where we, today, must go as well if we would understand God's mind concerning divorce.

Back to the beginning. Now when we do, I want you to note, let's notice several things. The first thing we notice is that marriage is the exclusive union of one male and one female.

[16:39] Notice Jesus in verse 6. He says, at the beginning, God made them male and female. He's quoting Genesis 1.27 where we read, so God created mankind in His own image.

In the image of God, He created them. Male and female, He created them. Now we ask, why is Jesus bringing the gender issue up for discussion on marriage and divorce?

Because God had marriage in view when He created mankind with two genders, male and female, boys and girls.

He did that because of what He was planning in giving marriage to humanity as a gift. On many levels, it was not good for the man to be alone as God created him first and he was by Himself. But God's remedy was not to create another man for Adam, but a woman. Woman is like the man in that she too is created in the image of God, but she is gloriously unlike the man in that she is a different gender of humanity.

[18 : 02] A gender unlike the man's, but answering to His maleness. Completing, complementing Him. So God created two genders, not one, and certainly not a hundred and twenty-one as we're hearing today.

We go back to creation to learn this from the Creator. another. Now why two and not one?

Because another man would not fit God's purpose for the world, which was that the two in becoming one flesh would thereby multiply and fill the earth with creatures made in the image of God.

God wanted the whole earth filled with image bearers. and that's why marriage was the union of a man and a woman who could produce that offspring and fill the earth with image bearers.

So Jesus quotes Genesis 1.27. Then He quotes Genesis 2.24. After creating the woman and bringing her to the man, God 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.

[19 : 28] Notice it's the two again. The two will become one flesh. Not the three, not the four. Marriage is the exclusive union of one man and one woman.

That's why in the marriage vows we say forsaking all others I give myself to you. So that's the first point. Marriage is the exclusive union of one male and one female.

Secondly, the marriage union is the dearest and closest relationship. The dearest and closest earthly relationship. Children, as you grow up, your closest relationship is with your mother and father.

Now, of course, there are exceptions to that, but that is the general rule and that indeed was God's design for your good. That mom and dad are the dearest relationship you have.

But God says for most, there comes a time for a man to leave father and mother. And we might ask, well, for what?

[20 : 36] For what reason would he ever want to do that? For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

Marriage forms a new relationship that is nearer and dearer than all others. It's the marriage union of a man and his wife that is the cause to leave the earlier closest relationship.

So, marriage establishes this new primary human relationship. No longer with mom and dad, but now with your husband, your wife. And oh, you still honor mom and dad.

you will do that all of their life and even after they're gone, you will speak in honorable ways about them. But another has now become your primary human relationship.

It is your husband. It is your wife. And when the married couple do not shift their primary allegiance and loyalty away from mom and dad to their spouse, there will be problems in the marriage because it's breaking with God's intended design.

[21 : 52] The apron strings must be cut. And that's not only true when the married couple hangs on. When the parents of the married couple cling and fail to let them go and do not make this adjustment, they become a hindrance to the new marriage relationship rather than the help that God intends for them to be to the new couple.

meddling where they don't belong. So leaving father and mother is in order to establish this new primary relationship. So husbands and wives look over at each other and know that he or she is your most important relationship apart from God alone.

Is So husbands, are you treating her as if that is true? And wives, are you treating him as your closest confidant and friend?

Prioritizing each other above parents, above children, above grandchildren, above other friends, above hobbies, possessions, work. That's the original design for marriage.

God has designed you for each other and together for the Lord himself. So the marriage union is the dearest and closest earthly relationship.

[23 : 19] And then thirdly, we learn, and this is coming more directly to bear upon the issue of divorce that is under discussion, our Lord Jesus would teach us that the marriage union is to be unbroken.

The Pharisees want to talk about divorce. Jesus wants to talk about marriage. Jesus wants, they want to know how to get out of marriage.

Jesus is telling them they must not get out of marriage. That the marriage union is a lifelong union. Hence, in the vows, we promise, till death do us part.

So Jesus altogether avoids the Jewish intramural arguments among the rabbis about what the grounds of divorce are.

And instead, he goes right back to God's original design. And he says, marriage is to be a permanent bond. The permanence of marriage is seen in several ways in this text.

[24 : 24] Notice in the passage that he quotes, Genesis 2.24, that in marriage a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.

Some of your versions are other. Translate that otherwise. And be, and cling to your wife or cleave to your wife. Hang on to your wife.

Don't let your wife go. To be glued, sticking fast to her is the idea. That should be clear enough.

It's meant to be a permanent bond. But furthermore, in the marriage union, Genesis 2.24 says that the two become one flesh. Now kids, this is one of the rare times when one plus one equals one.

There's a man and a woman. They are separate. They're unmarried. They're two people. But in the marriage union, the two become one.

[25 : 32] That's what the text plainly tells us. The two become one. They form one new unit.

And Jesus makes this point clear by adding his own commentary in verse eight. So, if that's true that the two become one, one, so they are no longer two, but one.

It follows, doesn't it? That's what Jesus is saying. What God said in Genesis 2.24 is that the two become one. So, I'm telling you, Jesus says, they are no longer two.

They are one. And then to put all doubt behind him, he goes on to draw out the obvious powerful conclusion in verse nine. Therefore, this is the conclusion of the matter.

You asked, is it right for a man to divorce his wife? Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate. Do you see what Jesus is saying?

[26 : 38] This is a God versus man thing. God himself is the one who does this. He's the one who makes the two one.

Notice it says, what God has joined together. This is something he's done. It's his action. It's his doing. The word here for join them together is used of yoking two beasts together.

Two oxen. They're two, but they're yoked together into one team. That's what marriage is. God has yoked you together as one team.

the minister doesn't do this. God does it. And therefore, the end of the matter, according to Jesus, is what God joined together.

Let man not separate. What God has taken the two and made them one is not to be separated by man. That's his conclusion.

[27 : 44] So, could words be clearer on the question at hand? Marriage is a God acted union.

Not to be violated by man. God's the one who created them male and female, intending for them to be united. And God is the one who has joined them together so that they are no longer two, but one.

Now, don't let man un-yoke what God has yoked together. Marriage, joining the two into one, is what God does.

Divorce, separating what God has united, is what man does. In rebellion against God, is to defy his purpose for creating marriage in the first place.

So, the Pharisees fail once again in their plan to embarrass Jesus. He's not embarrassed at all. He's going back to the original and corrects them all with a decisive no to divorce by taking them back to God's design that the marriage union is to be unbroken, not separated.

[28 : 59] And since marriage is not the invention of man, but God, therefore man's not free to change it. Man's not free to redefine it or supposedly to improve it. It's God's institution, and any who tamper with it will have to answer to him for it.

So, Jesus is talking to the Pharisees here. All this has been to them in answer to their question, but the twelve were there listening, remember? And so, verse 10 says, when they were in the house

again, now it's just Jesus and his disciples, away from the crowd, away from the Pharisees, when they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.

They seemed flabbergasted at his answer to the Pharisees. Did we hear you right on this? As if they expected Jesus to walk it back.

If they were expecting him to walk it back, they were further surprised, because he shows he absolutely meant it, and answered them, verse 11 and 12, anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her, and it works both ways.

And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery. Now this really takes the disciples' breath away. Matthew records their reaction at this point to Jesus' strong teaching on marriage and divorce.

[30 : 27] Matthew 19, 10 of this very conversation, the disciples then said to him, if this is the situation between a husband and a wife, it's better not to marry.

To be bound by such strict restrictions, it's like they're having second thoughts about the goodness of God in marriage. I don't know that if there were some of them that were still single, they might have been second guessing whether or not they wanted to get married.

And if they were already married, these disciples are wondering, should have I ever done so? I think it reveals to us just how lax and loose the current ideas in Israel were on marriage and divorce.

That these followers of Jesus, the twelve, should be so taken back by Jesus' words. But Jesus doesn't lower his opinion to what is popular but holds to God's righteous standard.

Now, let me say it's true that in Matthew's account of this conversation, Jesus does say this, anyone who divorces his wife except for adultery and marries another woman commits adultery.

[31 : 53] adultery. So there is the exception for divorce. If there was sexual infidelity, anyone who divorces his wife except for that and marries another woman commits adultery.

The reason being that that physical unfaithfulness is already such a violation of the marriage bond, the unique, exclusive bond of marriage. marriage, that doesn't mean that the marriage has to end, but that God permits it.

If there is no repentance due to the hardness of heart, but even with this exception for adultery, the disciples are still saying, if this is the case between a man and a woman, then it's better not to marry.

So, what do we have? We have Jesus upholding God's good gift of marriage, not wanting to see it drugged down, ruined, not wanting to see mankind suffering the effects of destroying what God meant to be permanent.

And believers, we have an even higher reason, because according to Ephesians 5, God has designed your marriage relationship to be a reflection of the tightest relationship between Jesus and his church.

[33 : 18] church. That's a permanent, unbreakable union, isn't it? And that takes your marriage to an even higher purpose to become a stage in which the world learns about Jesus' love for the church and about the church's submission to Christ, her head.

God, is that the highest motivation for your marriage? Does it ever come to mind, Christian couple, that that's why you're married, you're to be displaying this glorious Redeemer Jesus and his church?

Now, I quoted J.C. Ryle, a minister from the 1800s, and he doesn't leave it in the negative. This is what we're not to do. But as we've been seeing, that when God gives us a negative command and makes that explicit, there's often, if not always, the implied positive thing to do.

So, we see that he's saying we're not to separate what God has brought together. So, what's the positive on the other side? Well, it's to do marriage God's way.

To enjoy what God has meant from his heart of love to bless you and to knock your socks off. He rejoices in seeing you delighted in a marriage relationship.

[34 : 45] So, let's look at the positive side. And I just want to piggyback on J.C. Ryle. He has three points and I've added some of my own to them, but here's the first one he says.

He says, marry only in the Lord. If this is true, that you're with that person for life, be sure you marry in the Lord. And young people, this is especially important for you.

After receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior and your Master, the most important decision you will make in life is who you will marry. Not all will marry, but if you do, 1 Corinthians 7, 39 commands

you to marry another Christian.

So, single person, you're free to choose. You like redheads, blondes, brunettes, whatever. You're free to marry, but only in the Lord.

In marriage, God joins you together. He yokes you together and you're not to get hitched with an unbeliever. That would be an unequal yoke.

[35 : 56] That would be like a wolf yoke to a lamb. It doesn't work. Indeed, Amos, the prophet said, can two walk together unless they be agreed?

And if you are walking in the direction of heaven and with one aim in life that beats every other goal in life is to glorify the God who has saved you.

And you are in the yoke with someone who's on their way to hell. And their one aim in life is to live for themselves. You're in for trouble. Can two walk together?

Not if one's going that way and that one going the other way. So, be sure you marry in the Lord. Lord. And not just any professing Christian.

Not just any guy or gal that says, well, I'm a Christian. But one who actually helps you on to God. One who actually helps you obey his commands.

[36 : 57] One who prays for you and with you. And be sure that you're on the same page about the most important things in life. Be sure you're agreed that this is the road map for your marriage, for your family, for your church, for everything you do.

The Word of God. Find out what they believe about the Word of God. We heard the summary this morning. The five solas. Make sure you understand that person and what really makes them tick. This decision holds the potential to become the greatest source of earthly happiness or the greatest earthly misery.

So marriage ought not to be entered into lightly, but seriously, prayerfully seeking the mind of the Lord and even the godly counsel of others. Marry only in the Lord. Then Ryle says, don't expect too much.

Number two. I was going to leave that out. I thought he's taken a brush at marriage. But what he means is be realistic. Be realistic in your expectations.

[38 : 14] You may think you're marrying Prince Charming, but no, never forget that marriage is the union of two sinners, not two angels.

And that means as sinners you will splash your sins on one another and they will offend, you'll offend each other. So be learning to seek and to give forgiveness.

Growing in humility, growing in self-sacrifice. If you expect your spouse to meet all your needs, you're putting a weight on them that no human being can ever bear up or live up to.

Only Jesus can meet and satisfy your every need. And so you must be finding your commitment, your contentment in him, your fullness in Jesus.

And not to put that weight of expectation upon your spouse. In Christ, all the fullness of the Godhead lives in bodily form and you, Christian, are complete in him.

[39 : 19] Two Christians that know they're complete in fullness and having their cups full by Jesus Christ are then free to love each other. And then lastly, thirdly, Ryle says, strive first and foremost for each other's sanctification.

Do you know the more holy you are, the more humble you are, the more happy your marriage will be? I think I could write that as something that I've seen, witnessed to in over 40 years of marriage and witnessing marriages.

The holy you are, the more you are, the more you are, the more you are. The more you are, the happier you are. So commit to growing in your relationship, to pulling up the noxious weeds in your marriage, rooting out sins and offenses given and planting good seeds that will bear good fruit, the fruit of the Spirit.

Never stop working on your marriage. Prioritize it. It's some of the most rewarding work you'll ever do in this life. Next to loving God, the greatest commandment is what?

So love your neighbor as yourself. And men, who is your nearest neighbor? That would be the wife beside you. And wives, who's your nearest neighbor?

[40 : 41] That would be your husband. So second only to loving God is to love that person. Even as you love yourself, give her that privileged place in your love and in your life.

Give him that. Surprise each other with such selfless love, thinking more highly of the other than yourself. And that will pay rich dividends in your marriage, in your joy and peace, but also in your

witness to the watching world as you are a stage upon the world, upon which the world is seeing something of Christ and his church.

50 years ago, I heard Francis Schaeffer speaking to a group of young adults who were zealous to do something great for God.

And he said something that really took us back and seemed trivial to us. He said, one of the most powerful witnesses you can have to this sinful generation is to live happily and faithfully all your life in the bonds of marriage to one husband.

or wife. What? That's it? Yes. To be a living stage upon which you demonstrate that Jesus Christ redeems us from sin.

[42 : 05] Sin that is the curse of every relationship, of every marriage. Jesus redeems us from sin. And in redeeming us from sin, he redeems our marriage and makes it something beautiful.

It adorns the doctrines of God our Savior. It makes the gospel beautiful to the world. That is the greatest things that some of you could do with your life.

And that's stayed with me these last 40, 50 years. And I believe that it's true. I've witnessed it in this congregation. The glorious impact of holy, humble, happy marriages in a world that is falling apart in this area of marriage.

I'm not going to ask for a show of hands, but I do wonder how many of you would still be married if you husbands and wives, when you hit a great disagreement in your marriage, you would have said, I'm out of here.

My marriage wouldn't have lasted, and I doubt that yours would either. What is it saying to us?

[43 : 15] Well, it's reminding us. It's a sinner that I am, bound to another sinner, and we need to learn to forgive each other, to grow in the graces of Christ, forbearing with each other, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Andrew Peterson has a song in which he compares marriage to dancing in the minefields, and some of you who are married know what he's talking about. There are minefields in the marriage relationship, and sometimes you trip them and you say, wow, I didn't see that one coming, but boy, is it a big explosion.

And marriage can be like that, dancing in the minefields. But we little know how selfish we are, how committed to my way I am until I get married.

And yes, she is also committed to her way, you see. And then it can get ugly. And so Peterson has a repeated line in the song.

He says, this is harder than we dreamed, this marriage thing. It's harder than we dreamed, but I believe that's what the promise is for. Oh, that's right.

[44 : 26] We made a promise at the altar, didn't we? We promised that we would be faithful even unto death until death do us part.

And if you're depending on your feelings for your husband or your wife, that's not going to be glue enough to hold you together. But if knowing the will of God in giving us marriage to be a permanent bond and having made vows before God and witnesses, there's a glue that will stick.

And some days you'll need that glue and that'll be the thing that holds you together when if it were your feelings, you'd be out the back door with half the other marriages. So, it is harder than we dreamed, but that's what the promise is for.

You know, the Bible calls marriage a marriage covenant. A covenant was something that was secured with vows, with promises, serious promises. Malachi shows how God's punishments were falling on those who had broken their marriage vows.

He says, the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth because you've broken faith with her, though she's your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

[45 : 49] And then the Lord himself says, I hate divorce, so guard your spirit and do not break faith with her. I've united you.

Don't separate yourself. Let me say this and we're done. Some of you may have divorced in your past. And though it has remaining consequences for you and often in the children more than in any others, I want to make it clear that divorce is not the unpardonable sin.

And don't let the devil tell you that it is. Don't let him tell you that you must carry this burden around for the rest of your life.

The Lord Jesus says, come to me and whoever comes to me, I will in no wise cast out. The blood of Jesus, God's son, cleanses from all sin, every sin.

If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He said to that woman caught in the act of adultery, woman, is there no one left to condemn?

[47 : 01] No, none, Lord. Neither do I condemn you. Now go and sin no more. And if you're still carrying around guilt from that, you need to hear the voice of Jesus saying, I didn't bear your sins to the center cross in Calvary.

I didn't go there and suffer the wrath of God for you so that you could go through life carrying around this burden. I bore it. I carried it.

I suffered the punishment that brought you peace with God. So, drown your guilty conscience in the blood of Jesus. Get back to the gospel.

Get back to the cross. That's where forgiveness flows. And embrace the wonderful plan that God has and how he's able to take even what the devil means for evil and to work it together for good.

Let's pray together. Lord, we are like sheep without a shepherd, without you, and without your word.

[48 : 08] And we thank you for Mark chapter 10, 1 to 12, and that you speak so clearly to us, taking us back to first things. Lord, that's where we want.

We want to go. And I pray that you would bless every marriage here and that vows would be renewed, promises would be retaken, and the commitment to God's will in marriage would reign supreme over personal desires.

Protect us. Protect our marriages from divorce, from adultery, from everything that would bring shame upon the name of Jesus. Jesus, make our marriages to sing.

Make them to be a praise to the Lord Jesus who has redeemed us and redeemed our marriages, is redeeming them. And I pray for the young people here that you would keep them until they can find someone who will walk together with them in the ways of the Lord Jesus.

Hear us and answer us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.