

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: Christ the King

Outline:

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King's baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

At the end of Matthew 18 we have the longest treatment on forgiveness found in the NT as taught by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thematically we then come to the beginning of Matthew 19 where we have the longest treatment of marriage and divorce as found in the NT as also taught by Jesus.

The thematic connection relates to the need for forgiveness, not only in general with our brothers and sisters but especially within in the context of marriage where hard-hearted unfaithfulness and divorce may occur in the covenant community of believers.

1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.

This in effect denotes the completion of Christ's Galilean ministry as He now begins to make His way to the cross. He would not return to Galilee again until after the resurrection.

There are various incidents that Matthew omits which happened between the conclusion of Christ's Galilean ministry and the events that led rapidly to the cross, (cf. Lk. 9:51-18:14; Jn. 7:2-11:54). But for his thematic purposes Matthew now moves to the confrontation with the Pharisees in the region of Perea.

From Galilee Jesus came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan which is descriptive way of saying, Perea. The word Perea simply means "**beyond**" – denoting the area beyond the Jordan called Perea. Jesus had not previously ministered in this area.

Slide # 2



2 And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

The context is being set for Christ's next confrontation with the Pharisees. Everywhere Christ went the multitudes followed Him because of His extensive healing ministry. Truly Jesus healing ministry was unique in all the annals of history. It was in this context that...

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”

Note this was not an honest question – but rather a loaded question with the intent of “testing” or challenging Jesus on a very controversial subject.

Just before the time of Christ there had been two contemporary rabbis who developed contrasting views of thought regarding Deut. 24:1-4.

The issue of the debate centered around what constitutes legitimate grounds for divorce as found in Deut. 24...

Slide # 3

Deuteronomy 24:1 (NKJV)

1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes **because he has found some uncleanness in her**, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

One school of thought was named after a rabbi named **Hillel** who taught that Moses allowed divorce for essentially any reason. This was the liberal and most popular school of thought amongst the Jews. The Hillel school of thought said a man could divorce his wife **for all sorts of reasons** such as she burned his dinner or put too much salt on his dinner, he no longer loved her, he found someone more attractive, she had bushy eyebrows, she went out into public with an uncovered head, she spoke disrespectful of his parents, she could not have children, or just being unpleasant.

But in contrast was the school of thought which followed a rabbi named **Shammai**. He taught that Moses permitted divorce but only on the basis of some form of indecent behavior such as lewdness, or suggestive behavior, but that which came short of actual intercourse.

So, there were these two contrasting schools of thought in the background with the difference being in how they understood and applied Deut. 24:1-4.

In addition, this confrontation was taking place in the territory ruled by Herod Antipas who was called out by John the Baptist on his sexually immoral relationship with his brother's wife named Herodias and consequently got his head cut off (cf. Matt. 14:1-12). Part of the "**testing**" here may have been intended to embroil Jesus in a public dispute that would get him in trouble with Herod in similar fashion as what happened to John the Baptist.

So, the issue on the table is what is the legitimate basis before God for divorce? Not only was this debated in Christ's day the debate continues on to this very day.

The ideal is simple: God's intention for marriage is one man and one woman together in a covenant relationship for life – till death do them part.

Slide # 4

Hebrews 13:4 (NKJV)

4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but **fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**

That is pretty simple and straightforward. Where it gets messy is with the issue of divorce. Someone has said that **getting married is like falling into a river – it is a lot easier to get into than it is to get out of.** Divorce is always messy! Always! It is never God's will. It is never the ideal. And yet in a fallen world it is a reality that we have to grapple with.

They asked, “**Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?**”

4 And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’

Instead of getting in the middle of whose view was right Jesus went back to the ideal standard of God from the very beginning as found in Genesis 1-2. God hasn't changed His standards on marriage.

Once again, we see the voice of Jesus as being the voice of authority. He speaks for God because He is God and as God He speaks with the authority of God. That is why we call Him LORD! On so many levels this whole discussion about the place of divorce and remarriage is a Lordship issue and is a matter of how serious we take His Lordship authority.

The question, “**Have you not read**” would have been insulting to these Pharisees who prided themselves on their knowledge of the Word. It's like Jesus was saying, “**Haven't you read the first page of the Bible?**”

Slide # 5

Genesis 1:27 (NKJV)

27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Biblical thinking starts here. Marriage involves one man and one woman as created by God. God did not create one man and many women for him, and He didn't create one woman and many men for her. No, rather He created one man and one woman and brought them together in marriage as man and wife (Gen. 2:24). Thus, God created two complimentary genders and not 249 different gender combinations as one website reports.

Here Jesus affirms both the divine inspiration of Genesis and the reality of a historical Adam and Eve, and in doing so He takes the text literally or normally for what it plainly says. If one has a problem with taking Genesis literally then they have a problem with the authority of Christ – because He took it normally for what it plainly says.

Answers In Genesis is a ministry founded by Ken Ham that emphasizes “***the authority of the Bible from the very first verse.***” Exactly! Jesus takes us back to the very beginning in the very first chapter of the Bible to show that God’s standard for marriage has not changed.

5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?

Here Jesus quoted from Genesis 2:24. There is a leaving and a cleaving and a one flesh reality in marriage. Strong language is used here. To “***leave***” literally means “***to abandon***”.

This is a whole new start for the couple. They are no longer to cling to their parental home, but this is the start of their own independent family. As I often say to Janie, “***No matter what happens we are in this thing together.***” Peter describes it as being “***heirs together of the grace of life***” (1 Pet. 3:7).

And the words “***joined to***” means “***to be glued to***”. The idea is that they are now “super-glued” together spiritually before God. One cannot break apart something that is superglued without incurring severe damage to what is glued together.

The most permanent relationship before God is not the parent/child relationship but rather the relationship between husband and wife. As ordained by God there is no closer bond than that of a husband and wife and nothing is to interfere with that reality including outside family ties.

The relationship is so intimate that it is quite literally a one flesh relationship. The one-flesh relationship signifies oneness in life. Marriage is two lives now bound up together in one. It is a full giving of oneself to each other to where the two are one.

Marriage is a sexual reality – it is more than, that but it is definitely sexual. “***Joined to his wife... become one flesh***” portrays the sexual union which supersedes all other familial bonds.

There is both a physical reality to this, as well as a psychological and spiritual reality. It denotes a union of their entire persons.

The sexual union in marriage is more than just a physical act because a covenant commitment before God is involved in which God spiritually joins the couple together as husband and wife. It is a God-thing. To just have a sexual relationship without a covenant commitment is merely sexual immorality. True marriage involves both a covenant commitment and a physical consummation of oneness (cf. Prov. 2:17).

Slide # 6

Malachi 2:14 (NKJV)

14 Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.

To MAKE a covenant in the Old Testament literally meant "**TO CUT**" a covenant (cf. Gen. 15:18). The people would cut animals up and make an "aisle" formed by the dead animal parts. The parties to the covenant would then walk together between the bloody pieces signifying, 'If I don't keep my part, may God cause this to happen to me" (cf. Jer. 34:18).

Slide # 7

Jeremiah 34:18 (NKJV)

18 And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it—

A COVENANT was a sacred binding commitment which one was responsible to keep before God on pain of death for violation. It is for this reason that under the Mosaic Law in the OT the penalty for adultery was DEATH (cf. Lev. 20:10).

From the moment they are married, they are unified in a mysterious way that belongs to no other human relationship, having all the God-given rights and responsibilities of marriage that they did not have before. – ***ESV Study Bible***

After ordaining the institution of marriage in Genesis 1-2 we find at the end of OT history that God has not changed His standards as seen in Malachi – the last book in the OT.

Slide # 8

Malachi 2:16 (NKJV)

16 “For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

A main point here with Jesus is that God has not changed His standards concerning marriage that He laid down from the very beginning. Marriage is still as it was ordained by God from the very beginning.

6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

A covenant marriage as ordained by God between a man and a woman is a God-thing. They are supernaturally joined together by God. God is the One who ultimately presides over the wedding. It is His doing.

And what God has joined together in holy matrimony man is not to separate. Now, it is possible to do so, but man is commanded not to undo the work of God. This word “**separate**” (Gk. *chorizeto*) is the same word used to describe “**divorce**” in 1 Cor. 7:10. Whom God has joined together in marriage let no one separate in divorce.

It is important to note that the cross reference in 1 Cor. 7 clearly shows that Jesus in His teaching was addressing the marriage of believers in the covenant community of God's people and not the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever – which Paul goes on to address.

Slide # 9

1 Corinthians 7:10–12 (NKJV)

10 Now to the married [both believers] I command, yet **not I but the Lord:** A wife is not to depart from her husband.

11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

12 But to the rest [believers married to unbelievers] I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.

In addressing the marriage of believers in the covenant community Jesus goes back to God's original intent for marriage and basically says per the original mandate there was no "out".

They probably thought they had Jesus here because they are going to bring up Moses and to get Jesus to disagree with Moses would cause Him to lose all credibility because Moses was known as the greatest prophet in the history of Israel.

7 They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”

They immediately cited Moses in Deut. 24:1 asking why Moses then commanded "**to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?**"

Slide # 10

Deuteronomy 24:1 (NKJV)

1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds **no favor** in his eyes because he has found **some uncleanness** in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

Again, the issue is what lawful reason is legitimate for divorcing a wife. The issue is what is "**some uncleanness**"? Note the context here is dealing with a married couple who is already living together and not merely those in a **betrothal** relationship as some suggest. The Deut. 24 context is clearly dealing with a couple that is already living together in a fully consummated marriage.

This uncleanness couldn't be premarital intercourse with another man because that called for the death penalty as seen in Deut. 22:20-21. It couldn't be adultery because that also required the death penalty as seen in Deut. 22:22-27.

The word "**uncleanness**" comes from a root word (Heb. rwh) that basically means "*nakedness*" or "*genitals*" and is consistently connected with the idea of shame.

When you put it altogether this "**uncleanness**" was evidently something sexually indecent but not full-blown sexual intercourse. It is not totally clear and even for the Jews it was not totally clear.

Hence, the reason they debated the nuance of it. It seems it did involve something sexually offensive such as the woman flirting, or leaving her hair loose, or some such thing, which may have been considered sexually suggestive and offensive but technically it came short of full blown adultery.

Note the language in Deut. 24:1 that “***she finds no favor in his eyes***”. The idea of favor (Heb. ***hen***) is the idea of grace or perhaps even pity and is connected to having found some indecency in her.

Now the question is this: Is the emphasis on the man showing no grace or is it on the offensive nature of her “uncleanness”. What drives this? That is a great question! Perhaps the hardness of heart Christ goes on to describe could cut both ways. In other words, they both could potentially play this game to get out of the marriage. She could act indecently offensive if she wanted out and he could show no grace and find something he could claim as “indecent” if he wanted out. However, there is a strong emphasis directed in particular to the man in the rest of the OT. For example, in Mal. 2:14-16 the warning is given 3 times to the men not to deal with their wives treacherously in the matter of divorce.

Slide # 11

Malachi 2:14–16 (NKJV)

14 Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.

15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 “For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

Note in this patriarchal context the practice of the Jews was that only the males could initiate divorce. However, we note that Mark 10:12 states this principle in relation to women also, as does Paul in 1 Cor. 7:10-11. So, the principles related to divorce ultimately goes both ways.

It should also be noted that the only command really given in Deut. 24:1 is that if the man decided to divorce his wife on the basis of “uncleanness” he had to provide a certificate of divorce which would allow her to remarry.

The certificate would say, “***you are free to any man***”. This officially released her from the marriage, and she was free to remarry. However, she was forbidden to then return and remarry her first husband if she did get remarried (see. Deut. 24:1-4).

8 He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

Jesus makes an important clarification. Moses did not command divorce, but rather permitted it in a qualified sense because of the hardness of their hearts. But from the beginning this was never the intention of God.

The sense is that before God they never really had strong grounds for divorce, but it was permitted because the hardness of their hearts insisted on it.

Thus, in the OT divorce was never commanded but it was regulated as a concession to hard hearts. In this case the “***bill of divorcement***” served as form of protection for the women against the hard-hearted treatment of the husbands who wanted out. It allowed her “***an out***” and the possibility of remarriage as certified by a divorce certificate.

Note that where God permitted divorce, He also allowed the possibility of remarriage. “*The Pharisees did not ask about remarriage, for this was no problem.*” (Warren Wiersbe). It was assumed that if divorce was allowed then, so was remarriage. I believe the Scripture is consistent on this: Where divorce is permitted then so also is remarriage. The real issue is what constitutes a legal divorce in the eyes of God.

But this charge of hard heartedness was no complement! This insistence on divorce and remarriage was governed by hard hearts that in reality was contrary to God’s perfect will from the beginning. Again, God’s intention is that marriage be permanent – dissolved only by death.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

What Jesus says here builds on what He has already laid down earlier in the Sermon on the Mount and it follows the same pattern of correction that goes deeper and makes a stronger application of God’s truth.

In the sermon on the Mount Jesus showed that His teaching went beyond the teaching in the OT and actually presented a higher standard.

Slide # 12

Matthew 5:27–28 (NKJV)

27 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The OT said not to commit adultery, but Jesus took the principle further saying it is sin to even look with lust on a woman for to do so is to commit adultery in the heart. Under Christ, under grace, the standard is even higher.

Jesus then does the same thing with the issue of marriage.

Slide # 13

Matthew 5:31–32 (NKJV)

31 “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’

32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Under the law of Moses a concession was made to hard hearts that allowed for divorce for vague reasons related to some sort of “indecency” but Jesus put in place a higher standard saying the only exception for divorce is for immorality. Hard-heartedness was looser in what it allowed, but under Christ, under grace, the regulation is more strict – with divorce being allowed for ONLY in the case of absolute sexual immorality.

The Greek word translated as “sexual immorality” is the word porneia. It is a broad word for all manner of sexual immorality. In 1 Cor. 5:1 it denotes incest; in various contexts it refers to prostitution, premarital sex, extramarital sex, etc. (cf. Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 6:13, 18; 10:8; Eph. 5:3, 1 Thess. 4:3).

Clearly Jesus recognizes that sexual infidelity strikes at the very heart of the marriage covenant.

Marriage is really a sexual covenant in which vows are made to God making it a sacred sexual covenant relationship. Because of the sacredness of it to sexually violate it provides grounds for divorce.

Adultery is always very messy. In the case of sexual unfaithfulness, the innocent part can remarry without the charge of adultery hanging over them. However, if the divorce is unbiblical, without the grounds of sexual immorality, then the person forcing the divorce is guilty of being a contributing factor to adultery. This action pushes the innocent person out to where they will most normally find another person to marry and since it is unbiblical the person marrying her also commits adultery.

So, the person forcing the divorce is in effect perpetrating adultery, the person getting remarried is committing adultery, and the person they marry also commits adultery. It is one adulterous mess all the way around.

Now this does not mean that a person who commits adultery in remarrying is necessarily continually living in sin. There is forgiveness with God for those who repentant and get right (cf. 2 Sam. 12:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). And then as Paul emphasizes, we have to go on from where we are. We can't go back an unscramble scrambled eggs. You can only go forward.

And it needs to be noted that even though the 2nd marriage in this case is entered into in an adulterous fashion it is still called marriage. The couple is then married, and it would be just as wrong to then try and severe that marriage -for that would just add another divorce to the situation. In John 4 when Jesus addressed the woman at the well, He told her that she had previously had 5 husbands whom He recognized as all legitimately her husband, but the person she was with right now (her live in) was not her husband (Jn. 4:18).

“And marries another” implies that the second marriage, though it begins with adultery is still a marriage. Once a second marriage has occurred, it would be sin to break it up. The second marriage should not be thought of as continually living in adultery, for the man and the woman are now married to each other, not to anyone else.”

– ***ESV Study Bible***

The standard put forth by Jesus is that the only exception that allows for divorce and remarriage between two believers is the case of sexual unfaithfulness which violates the covenant relationship. Even then He doesn't say it necessitates divorce, but it does allow for it.

We always encourage repentance and reconciliation where possible. But this exception clause given by Christ in Matthew 19:9 does allow for the possibility of divorce and remarriage in the case of sexual unfaithfulness that violates the covenant relationship of marriage.

This is consistent with what Paul also taught.

Slide # 14

1 Corinthians 7:10–11 (NKJV)

10 Now to the married [both believers] I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

Paul says to the believers not to get divorced which is Christ's emphasis – with the only exception being sexual unfaithfulness. But if she does depart (get divorced) then she can either remain in a state of singleness or be reconciled to her husband. Paul does not give believers the option to divorce and remarry because that would be adultery.

Now again, an adulterous remarriage can be forgiven but we must not presume on the grace of God. It is dangerous to do so.

The only other exception that the NT lays out is in the case of a mixed marriage where the unbeliever departs (*that is forsakes the marriage*), in that case Paul says the brother or sister is not under bondage implying they are free to remarry (cf. 1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Here is an overview of what I see the NT teaching regarding the issue of marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Slide # 15

Four Qualifiers...

1. As seen in Matt. 19 the only legitimate grounds for divorce and remarriage when it comes to professing believers is immorality.
2. As seen in 1 Cor. 7:15 if an unbelieving partner leaves the believer then the believer is FREE – and I take it free to remarry.

3. When a person becomes a believer **all things are become new.** (2 Cor. 5:17) Whatever your situation at that point you go from there. 1 Cor. 7:24.
4. As a category of people, Paul speaks to those previously married but now single (widowed/divorced) and says it is **better to marry than to burn with lust.** We must go from where we are at seeking God for wisdom as we weigh all the biblical factors (1 Cor. 7:8-9).

10 His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”

The disciples got the point that Jesus was strongly emphasizing that marriage is for life and that apart from actual immorality there is no escape clause. Being influenced by the liberal stands of the day they were taken aback and said if that is the case it is better not to ever get married.

I mean what if you even up with a contentious wife that Solomon evidently knew a lot about – and of course with all his wives he undoubtedly knew a lot about this. He said it is better to dwell in the corner of a house top than in a house shared with a contentious woman (Prov. 21:9). And then going further he said, ***“Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.”*** (Prov. 21:19). He said, ***“A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike; whoever restrains her restrains the wind”***. (Prov. 27:15).

What about situations like this? With no way out, wouldn't it be better not even to marry. After all it seems like a pretty risky thing to do if it is permanent and there is no way out. It is true that marriage is a very sobering reality and not to be entered into lightly because we do indeed vow to be married for better or worse until death do us part.

Socrates once offered the following advice; “By all means **marry**. If you **get** a good wife, you'll be **happy**. If you **get** a bad one, you'll **become** a philosopher.

The answer is not that we just don't get married. God intended that normally people will get married. After all He designed marriage and God's answer to having a blessed marriage is the Spirit-filled life as addressed at great length in Ephesians 5. Yes, we live in a fallen world and even as believers we still have a flesh nature and so there will be struggles all the way through until we get to glory.

In the meantime, no matter what our circumstances may be we need to walk closely with God relying upon His grace which He says is sufficient for even the thorniest of situations in life (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

11 But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given:

Not all can accept the idea of life-long celibacy. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:7, **“each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.”** Jesus further explained...

12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”

A eunuch is one who does not have the ability to be sexually active. Some are born with congenital defects making them eunuchs from birth.

Others are made eunuchs by men. Typically, a eunuch in the ancient world was a man who had been castrated, who was then employed by the king to guard the women's living areas in his court. It is thought this was the case with Daniel living in Babylon. Others are made eunuchs because of injury. Whatever, the case some are made eunuchs by men.

Then there are those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom's sake. These are those who chose to remain celibate so that they might serve the kingdom's interests without distraction. Jesus was in this category as was Paul.

Jesus affirmed this position saying, **“He who is able to accept it, let him accept it”** but He also said, only those given this can accept it as seen in verse 11.

Slide # 16

It is important to recognize that neither Jesus nor the apostles see celibacy as an intrinsically holier state than marriage (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:4), nor as a condition for the top levels of ministry (Matt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5), but as a special calling granted for greater usefulness in the kingdom. Those who impose this discipline on themselves must remember Paul's conclusion: it is better to marry than to burn with passion (1 Cor. 7:9). – **D.A. Carson**

This statement from Jesus about celibacy is closely related to the previous issue of whether a divorced person must remain celibate. There are situations where in the sovereignty of God we are given a certain lot and we must live accordingly. However, there are other situations where we can accept it or not accept it depending on what has been called our “put together”.

Concluding Observations:

It seems to me that it is very fitting that the strongest passage on forgiveness immediately precedes this section dealing with the issue of divorce. Divorce is one of the hardest things in life to deal with – often even more so than death.

Life does not give us a do over. We have to go from where we are. What's been done in the past is the past. We can't go back. All we can do is go from where we are.

Slide # 17

Philippians 3:13 (NKJV)

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

Praise the Lord for His forgiveness. Any sin we have committed regarding the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage is no more unforgivable than any other sin. God calls us to walk in freedom. If you have confessed your sin you are forgiven. There is to be no lingering stigma for those repentant. Whatever your current arrangement in life you go from there and you go in freedom!

I think of Joseph. His brothers had treated him so badly – violating every brotherly principle of love you can think of. After their father Jacob died they again came to Joseph and fell down before his face saying, “**Behold we are your servants.**” Joseph's response was “**Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?**” (Gen. 50:18-19). No one is in the place of God and if God has forgiven you and you are right with Him that is all that matters. You go from there. In his prayer of confession after falling into adultery followed by murder David said to God, “Against You, and You only, have I sinned.” (Ps. 51:4). Ultimately accountability for sin is before God ALONE Who is the final Judge of all.

But we never want to be presumptuous. Yes, Jacob had two sister-wives (Rachel & Leah) but it was characterized by constant strife and tension. Yes, Abraham had illicit relations with Hagar and the Middle East is a hotbed of contention to this day because of it. Yes, David committed adultery, but the consequences were life-long. Everywhere you look the violation of God's design for marriage always has consequences.

We go from where we are, but we want from this point out to follow God's design as closely as possible. That is where the blessing and the reward are to be found. We can't play games with God and get away with it.

There are hundreds of scenarios that one has to deal with in this fallen world. We must apply the Word of God (**inductively**) as consistently and faithfully as possible. There are clear lines but there is also grace. Divorce is never good but at times it may be permitted. Remarriage is never the ideal but at times it may be the best option. We must always stress the seriousness of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Marriage should never be entered into lightly and neither should divorce or remarriage. Divorce should always be a last resort and always with biblical grounds. Reconciliation should always be encouraged whenever possible and biblical.

As with the whole of life marriage is ultimately a Lordship issue and the great issue in life is seeking to bring glory to God.

Slide # 18

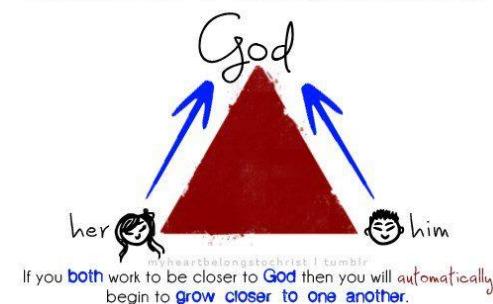
2 Corinthians 5:9–10 (NKJV)

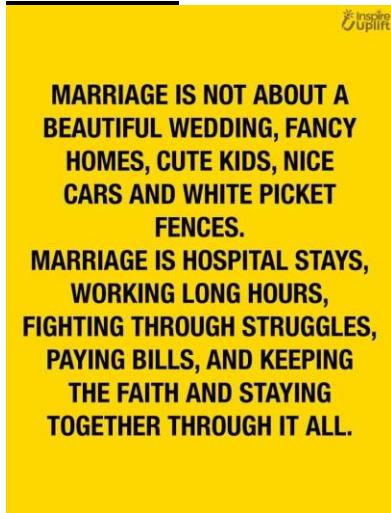
9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Slide # 19

Formula for a healthy relationship



Slide # 20

Marriage is all these things and a whole lot more. Marriage is the union of two lives together in one for the glory of God.

If you have two believers who are serious about Jesus and His Word and they as a way of life stay focused on Jesus, then the marriage will truly be blessed and God will be glorified.

Whatever our station in life may we make it our aim to live according to God's design to the end that He may be glorified. In the end its really all about Him!

Philippians 2:12 (NKJV)

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

God help us to live accordingly!