

Message Transcript

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE: WHAT GOD WANTS AND THE HOPE HE GIVES | THE KINGDOM REVEALED

AARON BROCKETT | SEPTEMBER 5, 2026

Really good to be with you on this three-day weekend, wherever and however you may be joining us, I'm really glad that you are here. If you have a Bible, go ahead and meet me in Mark, chapter 10. That is where we are going to be together today.

As you are turning there and settling in, I've just got a couple of things, housekeeping items, that I want to mention to you. Many of you know that our Westfield campus is going to be launching in just a few short weeks, on September 20. We're very excited about that. And if you are interested in that campus you can scan this QR code. If you know anybody who may be, you can send that to them.

Guys, we're really excited. We've got about 2,000 people on the interest list for the Westfield campus. That's more than any other campus launch we've ever had in the history of our church. And it's needed. It's really needed. Those of you who live in Westfield city limits, and you are already a part of our church family, specifically if you go to the Carmel campus, can we ask you to consider freeing up your parking spot and seat at Carmel and making the Westfield campus your home campus?

The reason why, I don't know how many of you know this but, on average, we send about 50 cars, or turn about 50 cars away at the Carmel campus every weekend. They just can't even get into the parking lot. And so this will help with that. You would be helping us clear the way and be on mission with us if you can make Westfield your home campus. Really appreciate that.

The second thing I want you to know is that our Downtown campus is going to be launching a Saturday night service on September 12 at 4 p.m. So, Downtown campus if you would be willing to clear the way on Sunday morning and make Saturday night your home service that you go to—maybe your small group can attend the 4 p.m. and then go to dinner after that. Just be praying about the launching of Saturday night Downtown.

Well, if you've been in our church this year you know that we are in a series of messages lasting all year long called The Urgent Kingdom. And what we are doing is we're just working our way slowly, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, through this fast-paced gospel of Mark.



And last week we finished up chapter 9. This week we're going to jump into chapter 10. We're going to cover the first 12 verses together. What I'd like to do, so that we make sure that God's Word is clearly spoken and heard is just to go ahead and read our text and then we'll unpack it together today. So, if you've got the passage in front of you, follow along with me as Mark writes, beginning in verse 1, these words:

"Then Jesus left Capernaum and went down to the region of Judea and into the area east of the Jordan River. Once again crowds gathered around him, and as usual he was teaching them. Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: 'Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?' Jesus answered them with a question: 'What did Moses say in the law about divorce?' 'Well, he permitted it,' they replied. 'He said a man can give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away.' But Jesus responded, 'He wrote this commandment only as a concession to your hard hearts. But "God made them male and female" from the beginning of creation. "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.'

"Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again. He told them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries someone else, she commits adultery.'" (NLT)
Let's pray together.

Father, we come to You today and we want to place ourselves under the authority of Your Word. And this is a heavy text. And so, God, I just pray that in these next few moments that we would allow You by way of the Holy Spirit to speak clearly.

And, God, I'm reminded that there isn't anybody who needs the gospel of grace more than me right now. And that those listening to the sound of my voice would recognize that when the truth of Your Word is met with the grace that comes through Jesus, that really brings transformation into our lives, our relationships, our souls, and our marriages.

And we ask this right now in the power of Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen.

In the late 1930s there was a man by the name of Harry Bailey who was late to dinner with his family yet again. However, he kind of easily justified it in his mind convincing himself that he was busy providing for his family. So, it didn't really matter whether he was present with them at the table as long as they had a table to eat from.



Walking in half-way through the meal, he acknowledged his wife and kids but not much else. He inhaled his food and then he told his wife, grabbing his hat and coat, that he was headed back out, that he had more work to do. He'd be home in a couple of hours.

And his exhausted wife, Nelly, you would think that she would be surprised by this news, but she wasn't because this had been a pattern for them for some time. She had her suspicions that he wasn't being faithful to her for months. And having those suspicions confirmed, she made the difficult decision that she would subject herself to it no longer.

A few weeks later, Harry came home late for another meal. There was no family around the table, just a letter from Nelly informing him that she was leaving and would be taking the children. The marriage was over.

Facing the cold, hard reality that he had blown up his marriage and he was losing his family a giant wave of shame and guilt and regret swept over him that he was being held back by his own self-delusion. And he crumbled up on the floor of that empty home that was once filled with the voices and laughter of his wife and kids and Harry wept.

Years went by, Nelly moved on and she had given her life to Jesus after the divorce. She eventually met a man named Bob and was remarried to him. He was a godly man, a train engineer.

Harry, living his life, got invited to another church on the outside of town, Racine Christian Church, where he actually heard the gospel of grace for the very first time and he began following Jesus. Meeting a woman in that church named Ruby they began dating and they eventually got married. Still not a perfect man by any stretch of the imagination, Harry made an effort to mend what he could with his former wife, Nelly, and his kids as he stumbled his way through following Jesus for the rest of his life.

Upon his death years later, his funeral was in that little church where he had given his life to Jesus. His grown children and family, including his ex-wife, Nelly, and her husband, Bob, would be in attendance. They rang the church bell in honor of him.

One of Harry and Nelly's sons who was a boy when they divorced, his name was Lloyd, he grew up and he would meet a young lady in their teen years named, Thelma. Thelma was somewhat concerned about his family of origin, that he'd come from a broken home and expressed to him that she would not date him if he did not know Jesus. So, he took that into consideration. Several months went by and he genuinely made a decision to follow Jesus.



He went back, told her and they began dating. They got married and then they started a family of their own.

\

They had two girls. The oldest one, Wanda, the youngest one, Linda. Linda would grow up. She would get married and have two children of her own. The oldest a boy, the youngest a girl. They named the boy Aaron. And he's standing before you today as your pastor, the product of a broken, messed up, sinful, imperfect family filled with broken, messed up, sinful, imperfect marriages that, by God's patience and grace, He brought some redemption into.

That was a mouthful. If you were able to follow all of that—which, kudos to you if you were. You can re-watch this message and slow it down to half speed. I just want to show you this picture right here up on the screen. This is a groundbreaking ceremony for a church building in the 1960s and the man standing to your far right with the white shirt and black tie is Harry and Nelly's son, Lloyd, my grandfather. My mom's dad.

And then the man second to the left with the white hair and the suit, that's Nelly, my great grandmother's, next husband, Bob, the train engineer who she was remarried to after divorcing from Harry. And then the guy on the far left, interestingly enough, was the pastor of that church, Martin Brocket, my dad's dad, my grandfather. It's like a bad reality TV show. You just can't make this stuff up.

And the reason why I share all of that with you is to simply say this. What started in betrayal, divorce, and pain ended with God re-writing that script, putting the broken pieces back together again because that's what He does. As the prophet Isaiah would say so eloquently, "God brings beauty from ashes." Last week we finished chapter 9 where Jesus just finished confronting the disciples about squabbling over positions of greatness. They are on their way to Jerusalem where Jesus would be nailed to a cross for you and for me. And sandwiched here in our text is a teaching that seems to come out of the blue that He gives on marriage and divorce.

I thought two things this last week as I came across this knowing that I had to study for this message. First thing I thought was, "Yay." The second thing I thought was, "I should have extended sabbatical another two weeks." That's what I thought.

This is a tough passage. You could probably feel it as I read it. And there are good reasons why. It's likely there are a lot of opinions and emotions expressed about both of the subjects of marriage and divorce today, for a good reason. You likely have a few of your own.

In our passage, Jesus tells us very plainly what He thinks about both. And since Jesus is God in the flesh, it's probably something we should pay attention to.



I don't often put a lot of emphasis on sermon titles, honestly because I don't think that you care that much about them. But in this instance, for this text, for this sermon, I think you knowing the title of the message would be helpful. I've entitled this message:

Marriage and Divorce: What God Wants and the Hope He Gives

I think that it is really important that you see and hear that title, especially the sub-title, so that you know where we're going because given the number of people who will listen to this message, both today and throughout the week, I don't have to guess that for many the subject of marriage and divorce hits a nerve and it stirs the emotions for all kinds of good reasons that we will get into together today.

Some of us, many of us, carry the scars of divorce, whether it was your own parents who split when you were growing up or maybe your own marriage that didn't make it. Or maybe right now you are walking through a divorce and you know the pain and shame that is associated with it. Some of you know, all too well, what it feels like to wear a scarlet D on your chest, figuratively speaking. The research now a days, as well as my own interactions with single people reveals that right now relationships and dating are perhaps more difficult than they have ever been. Many of us feel dissatisfied and disenchanted.

I think there are a lot of reasons contributing to this that are considered normal now a days, but they haven't always been normal. Things like co-habitation and living together before marriage, online dating, social media have all shifted assumptions and changed expectations of those looking for a potential mate and marriage. The struggle is real. Can I get a good amen?

And if you do manage to navigate the hunger games of dating and find somebody that you want to commit to, marriage can oftentimes feel a little bit like a modern day Titanic. The idea of getting on board sounds exciting but it feels like sinking is inevitable as you see marriages all around you hitting an iceberg.

Somewhere between being attracted to another persona and making the statement, "Until death do us part," can feel like maybe we're tiptoeing through a relational minefield where it feels like relationships and marriages are blowing up all around us. And we could step on a landmine of some kind at any moment. Do you know, right now, if you go back about 60 years you'll find that about 88 percent of people between the ages of 25 and 35 were married. But today—for every 30 years of a jump into the future—we see more than a 20 percent decrease in that number. In fact, just last year, 2025, just 44 percent as opposed to 88 percent of that same demographic, ages 25 to 35, is, in fact, married today—like half.



And today, for those of us who are married, about 42 percent end up divorce, another 20 percent just end up operating like roommates instead of divine teammates. And it's not that people are desiring marriage less, it's that we are struggling with marriage that much more leaving us with all kinds of questions. Maybe questions like this:

What is marriage, and what is its purpose?

Is it even necessary today?

Why is marriage so hard, and is it possible to thrive?

Why is marriage, at times, so hard, and is it possible to thrive?

Is there ever a time when divorce is permissible?

Is there ever a time, biblically, when divorce is permissible? We'll get into that in a minute. And then this question:

If divorced, can I be forgiven, and is there hope beyond?

I'll just go ahead and answer that question with a definitive: Yes. And I'm a living testimony of it in my own family tree and many of us in our church are as well.

And I want you to know that, if you've been through a divorce and experienced that. Divorce is messy, it's complicated, it's painful, but it is not the unforgivable sin. Grace abounds.

Jesus provided it to the woman at the well in John, chapter 4, who didn't have just one divorce, or two divorces, but she had five of them and she was shacking up with a guy who was her current boyfriend. Jesus meets her at a well. And at first she's defensive, but His tenderness and His truth absolutely change her life.

Now, we say this. If divorced people can't be redeemed by God's grace and Jesus' blood, then none of us can. However, with that said, we also don't want to treat divorce lightly. In Malachi, chapter 2, verse 16 it's very, very clear that God hates divorce. Now, He doesn't hate divorced people. It says that He hates divorce. And you want to know why? It's because of what divorce does to people who God loves.

And if you have ever experienced divorce, whether directly or indirectly, I'm just willing to bet whether you had a biblical justification for it or whether or not you felt like you had no other choice, I bet you hate it too.

Apparently we aren't the only ones who had questions about divorce and marriage because Jesus is fielding a big one here in verse 2. But I just want to point this out. The question that He gets is not an honest question coming from a sincere place. It's a loaded question with an agenda. You ever had one of those? As a pastor I've been on the receiving end of a few of those.



Look at the question again in verse 2, just to remind you. It says:
"Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: 'Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?'"

This is a trap and Jesus knows it. Now, one small but significant detail that would be important for you to know is where this conversation goes down, geographically. If you go back to verse 1 you see that Mark goes out of his way to tell us exactly where they were. They were in the region of Judea east of the Jordan River.

Why would he tell us that? I don't know, quite possibly because this is the very place Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, had called out Herod Antipas for his shady divorce not long ago and as a result it got him killed. This is the same ground. Matthew, chapter 19 is a parallel passage to Mark 10. And when Matthew tells us about this, he actually extends the question on out. Matthew says it this way. The Pharisees' question was:

"Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife, here's what Matthew adds, "for any reason?" Matthew 19:3 (NLT)

Hillel Shammai

So, what's going on here? What's going on is that Jesus has found Himself smack dab in the middle of a conspiracy and a debate that had been raging for 100 years between two Rabbinical schools of thought, the school of Hillel and the Rabbinical school of Shammai. Both of them were arguing over the interpretation of one word in the Old Testament law in Deuteronomy 24, verse 1. Let me just read it for you. This is what they were fighting about. It says this: "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something," and here's the word, "indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce..." (NIV)

Now the source of the debate between the Rabbinical schools of Hillel and Shammai was over the meaning and the application of that word indecent.

Hillel Shammai
Liberal anything conservative sexual sin only

So, the more liberal school of Hillel interpreted indecency to mean anything. So, like if she changed her hair and you didn't like it, divorce. If she burned your chicken quesadilla, she's out. If she cheers for the wrong sports team, we're done. And the more conservative school of Shammai limited indecency to infidelity or sexual sin.



So, the Pharisees' question to Jesus is an attempt to lure Him into this long-standing debate of which you know both sides would have been represented in this circle and they are trying to get Him into trouble, quite possibly with the house of Herod since he had already taken His cousin's head.

So, here's essentially what they are doing, "Hey, Jesus. Here's a time bomb or like a hand grenade of a topic. Which one are You going with? Which camp are You in, Jesus? You going with the liberals or the fundamentalists?"

And likely many in the crowd would have had deep-seated opinions and they would have experienced divorce and they would have been overhearing this conversation. So, no matter what Jesus says, somebody isn't going to like it, somebody is going to be offended. I know what that is like. This is a big difference. I'm no Jesus (many of you know that) because His response whenever He gets trapped is brilliant. My responses are usually dumb. And He answers their trap of a question in verse 3. Look at it again. He says: "What did Moses say in the law about divorce?"

Hey, Jesus knows what Moses said. They answered:

"Well, he permitted it," they replied. "He said a man can give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away." But Jesus responded, "He wrote this commandment only as a concession to your hard hearts."

So, Jesus corrects them right away. Moses never commanded or encouraged divorce; he permitted it. There's a difference. What is it and why?

Well Jesus answered that too, right away. He said, "This was a concession," that's another word for an exception. Like, this isn't the norm. This is the exception, due to hardened hearts.

The idea behind it mostly had to do with protecting women during the first century. During Moses' day, many of you know this, this will be review for you, women were in a vulnerable spot if they weren't married.

So, if a man was married to a woman and his heart got hard toward her and he left her without granting her an official certificate of divorce, it would leave her in an extremely dangerous and vulnerable spot. Without a certificate of divorce, she could not then remarry and that limited her options to either prostitution or begging, both would put her in grave danger. So, when Moses makes this concession it was an effort to protect women.

He's essentially saying to the hard-hearted guys, "Hey, if you're going to be a jerk about it and leave her," that's not exactly what he says, trust me, it's in the Hebrew, he says, "at least make the divorce official and give her a certificate so that she can remarry and put her life back together and not be put in harm's way. That was the grieving heart behind Moses' concession."



Then in verse 6 what Jesus does is He's going to redirect the focus off of the negative subject of divorce and He's going to elevate and highlight God's original intent for marriage. And Jesus quotes, here in the passage, Genesis 1, verse 6 in Genesis 1. Jesus said:

"But 'God made them male and female' from the beginning of creation. 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."

I love what Jesus is doing here. He's changing the subject. Instead of being down here in the mud talking about divorce, He elevates the conversation to God's intent for marriage. As the old Proverb says, "Never wrestle with a pig, you both get dirty, and the pig is the only one who likes it."

So, Jesus is elevating the conversation and from His description we are provided with a few truths that are important for us to know or to be reminded of. If you are taking notes this is what you write down.

Number one: out of the text Jesus is essentially saying:
Marriage is God's idea

Marriage is not defined by, therefore it cannot be redefined by, any government or manmade authority structure. God has the patent on marriage. And God is a Creator and anything He creates is with intention and purpose. He does not create randomly. And He designed marriage to be between one man and one woman for life with the intent of human flourishing and reproduction (because you know, we have the plumbing to do so) and to be fruitful and multiply. And we do not get to arbitrarily reassign the function of the invention. In fact, if I were just holding up this coffee cup to you and if I were to say, "Hey, do you like my hat?" You'd be like "Brother, that's a cup." I couldn't just arbitrarily change the definition of the cup because I wanted a hat.

Now, you've heard me say this before. Anything God creates Satan counterfeits. And so, Satan tries to redefine marriage to anything other than one man, one woman for life. But God is the author of it, it is His idea. Jesus affirmed that in the passage.

Number two is this:

Marriage is a picture of an eternal reality



The Bible teaches that marriage exists, at least in part, to put on display a greater reality between Jesus and His bride. Do you know Jesus has a bride? Not a physical one, a spiritual one—the big C church. Revelation 19 describes the marriage supper of the Lamb, referring to Jesus and the church. Revelation 21 describes the new Jerusalem as a bride adorned for her husband. In 2 Corinthians 11 Paul describes the church as a pure bride promised to a husband, Christ Jesus.

Isn't it interesting that the very first supernatural miracle that Jesus ever did in His earthly ministry was at a wedding. He didn't choose to reveal His glory in a church service, in a court room, in a Synagogue or a temple, but at a wedding in Cana where they ran out of wine. And so He turned water into wine. And you know it wasn't any old general apothic red, but it was Camas to the glory of God the Father. Why? Because the Lord is serious about the covenant of joy between a husband and a wife.

And our marriages here on earth are rehearsals of the grand finale in the new heaven and earth, the marriage supper of the Lamb, which explains, at least in part, why marriage is attacked so relentlessly, societally and interpersonally, because anything God creates Satan corrupts. The very first thing, just duly noted here, that Satan attacked in the Garden was Adam and Eve's marriage. And marriage is difficult enough as it is, because it involves two imperfect, broken sinners. And I hate to be the bearer of bad news but if you are married and you love Jesus, Satan hates your marriage all the more. I can say it this way:

When you start a family, Satan picks a fight

There are times... I've said this to you before; the birthmark of every believer is a bullseye. When you come up out of the baptism after giving your life to Jesus it's as if Satan points a laser right at your back and he takes aim at you because now you are in the family of God. I can also say that for marriages. Sometimes whenever married couples come here and they get excited about being a part of the church and they are like, "Hey, we're all in. We're going to man our station, and we're going to clear the way, and we're going to give our first and best, and we're going to invest and invite, and we are here," I just sometimes want to slap a warning label on that and say, "Okay, your marriage has just gotten elevated up the priority list for the things that Satan wants to take out."

And so, if God hates divorce, you know what Satan hates? Your marriage. He hates your marriage and he would love to destroy it, which is why this next truth is so crucial and important:



Marriage is a covenant, not a contract

In verse 8 Jesus repeats Himself. He says you are united into one; you are not two but one. And He emphasizing the importance of this concept. The Hebrew phrase one flesh is describing the idea that two distinct individuals with different personalities and perspectives are woven together into one where God creates something new that didn't exist before. It's why He says:

"...let no one split apart what God has joined together."

And a divorce, regardless of whether or not you feel like there is biblical justification or maybe you just did the best you could and you needed to get out of it—we all know that divorce is never a clean separation. It's not like separating two magnets. If you put two magnets together and then you pull them apart, they'll separate but it's a pretty clean separation. But a marriage is not like that. A marriage is like gluing two pieces of construction paper together and it dries and when you try to separate that you just tear everything apart. Marriage isn't a contract or a 50/50 partnership. It's a covenant, a binding agreement or commitment rooted in relationships, which are messy, rather than in legal terms that are usually cut and dry. And this is why God relates to His people in the Old Testament, not through contracts, but through a covenant. So you can think Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and ultimately the New Covenant through Jesus' blood shed for us on a cross.

What's the difference? A contract is transactional and can be dissolved when terms aren't met. A covenant is relational and it's unilaterally sustained by the more faithful party, even when the other side fails.

Case and point—you can do it a maybe later today or tomorrow—just read or re-read the story of the prophet Hosea and his wife Gomer. And God says to Hosea, this godly man, "I want you to do an ungodly thing. I want you to go down to the bad part of town and I want you to find a prostitute named Gomer." And by the way, if you are a prostitute named Gomer it's just two strikes against you. Alright?

And he finds this woman and he redeems her and he brings her home and he makes her his bride and they have a family together and things seem to be going good until one day he comes home and she's gone. And he gets this pit in his stomach and he knows where she might be. He didn't want it to be true. He goes back down to the red light district and he sees his wife working the streets once again, in the arms of another man.

And his response is what you would expect. He is hurt. He is heartbroken. He is going to leave her. And God said to him, "I want you to go and I want you to buy her back from her pimp and take her home."



And this is not God telling Hosea to subject himself to abuse. This is God saying to this prophet who was prophesying the message of the gospel, "This is what I am going to do for My people through Jesus."

See, we need to be really, really thankful that God's relationship with us is not contractual but it is covenantal. A contract is this, "I will just as long as you will." A covenant is, "I will even if you fall short." And in a contract, instead of remembering the promise you made to one another, you end up analyzing the performance.

The late Tim Keller would say it this way, "If your marriage is based upon anything other than promise, then eventually it will be governed by moods and circumstances."

Which is why, by the way, it's really harmful to give your body physically to someone you are not in covenant with. See, sex is designed to illustrate this covenant that we are talking about. It is the highest expression of intimacy reserved for the highest form of commitment for life. Which is why sex outside the covenant can cause so much pain, which includes, by the way, living together.

I'm just going to go out on a limb and say, if you are living together you're probably sleeping together, unless you just have more will power than anybody else. And the social sciences are just catching up to the wisdom of God's Word on this because statistically it's more difficult for couples who live together before marriage to stay together after marriage.

That's not just a Christian thing to say. That's a study out of the University of Denver in 2023. They came and said that couples that move in together before marriage, get this, were 48 percent more likely to divorce.

I think that part of the reason why is because when that happens what we are essentially saying, whether we are cognizant of it or not, is that we want the benefits of marriage without the covenant, without the commitment, without the sacrifice. We want to test drive the car without putting our name on the title. And I just want to get you to think about it for a minute. Pull yourself back from this emotionally for just a moment. If somebody is willing to date you and to sleep with you without making a life-long commitment in covenant, do you think it's going to be easier or harder for them to forsake that commitment once you are married, especially if they are feeling unfulfilled?



I can just say it very, very bluntly that if you are sleeping around before marriage and you're sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend before the covenant, you are essentially training yourself to have an affair.

Living together before marriage might help out some financially but it is not helpful for your heart. It is not setting you up well. And marriage is challenging enough as it is. Don't make it any more difficult than it needs to be.

What that might mean is that maybe for some of you, you're living with somebody right now, and if you've been coming to church and you love Jesus and you're trying to do this His way and you just necessarily didn't know any different or you're kind of in it already, what it might mean is that you need to have a hard conversation and maybe make a decision about one of you moving out and doing it God's way until you can make a covenant.

And, by the way, I don't want to just throw that at you and say, "Figure it out." I do want to say we'd love to be the church and come alongside you and help. There is grace upon grace. You may be like, "Well, what do you mean?" Well, we have a number of people in our church who have extra guest bedrooms that they would open up. I know. We've done it before in the past. And they would open up that to you and walk along that with you. No shame, no shade, no judgement. They just want to help you set up your covenant right so that way you can sustain it through the difficult times.

Some of you are like, "Well, how do I find those people?" Well, I don't know. Look around the room at whatever campus you are in, find an older couple with gray hair and wrinkles who are holding hands and go ask them. And say, "Hey, we just want to do this God's way. We just need some help in this."

Listen. I just want you to look right at me with this because I know maybe some of you are right here and you are with your boyfriend or your girlfriend and you're pinned to your seat right now, and you are too scared to look over at them. My goal is to never shame or beat you up—ever. But aside from this topic, if the only thing I ever said up here just affirms what you already believe or reinforces your point of view, I am likely not teaching the whole council of God but just saying what you'd like to hear. And I love you too much not to tell you the truth.

I just want to lovingly say this to everybody, me included, align your life with God's Word and don't try to align God's Word with the way you want to live your life or your sex life. It's for your good.



He only has one church. And if the church has its Bible open and its eyes on Jesus, they may not do everything the way that you love to do it, they might not be right on everything, we certainly aren't either, but we need every church to be on its game to advance the Kingdom of God forward. Jesus said, "Don't draw lines." Don't draw lines. Don't be territorial.

And if you thought that was hard, Jesus really goes hard in the paint next. He says:
Stop encouraging and tolerating sin

In verses 42-48 He says:

"But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone hung around your neck."

He's basically saying, "Enticing or leading anyone into sin is a serious deal. Especially a child. And then He uses two Greek words for millstone. One millstone is a really big one, and then there is a really little one. Jesus uses the Greek word for the big one to talk about how serious He is about this. And then

He says this:

"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better to enter eternal life with only one hand than to go into the unquenchable fires of hell with two hands. If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off."

Would you not agree that this is a startling metaphor? And it is a metaphor. It's hyperbole. And He's using it to describe the seriousness of sin. It's kind of like this. If you had an infection in your arm and the surgeon said, "We need to remove the limb because we don't want the infection to get into the body and take your life," it would be really horrible to lose your limb, but it would be worse to lose your life. That's kind of similar to what He's saying here.

Now, here's the rule for Bible interpretation. Whenever you read something like this, the first question you have to ask is, "What is He not saying?" So, He's not suggesting that you literally start hacking off body parts. There were some early church fathers that took it literally and it didn't end well. Alright? What Jesus is doing is He is using exaggeration and hyperbole to make a point.

And, by the way, we do this all of the time. Any of you ever said to someone, "I could eat a horse."? Yeah, I hope you don't literally mean that you are going to show up at the Kentucky Derby with silverware. No, you are just using an analogy. You're just like, "Man, I'm really, really hungry."



Here's why Jesus is saying this. He's not saying this to throw shade at you or to shame you or to make you feel bad about yourself. He's saying, "Marriage is far too valuable to Me and I want you to value it too."

Well, in verse 10 it says later... So they get done with the whole discussion. It's kind of interesting; Mark doesn't tell us how it was resolved. They just kind of get done with the discussion. And it says:

"Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again."

I bet they did, "Jesus, that was tough. We actually had some additional questions but we didn't want to make it look like we weren't supportive of You in front of them. So, we'd like to ask You now." Kind of kicking it around the living room in front of the game.

So, Jesus says this to them, which may be even more confusing. He says in verse 11:

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries someone else, she commits adultery."

What does that mean?

Several years ago I was talking to a precious lady who came up to me in tears and she told me that she had been married years ago and she had an affair. Her marriage ended in divorce. There was a lot of shame, a lot of guilt that she was still carrying with it.

And she said, "I'm trying to do things God's way. I've been following after Jesus. And I've been dating a great Christian man. And he would like to get married but I'm not going to marry him because of this verse. I don't want to make him an adulterer. And I guess I just need to ask. Is that what Jesus means when He says this?" No.

It's really important that we actually understand that in Jewish culture, in the first century, women could not initiate a divorce. However, Mark is not writing his gospel to the Hebrews, but to the Greeks where women could initiate divorce. The other thing to consider is that because adultery in Jewish culture was punishable by death, that was pretty good motivation not to have an affair. But people were still people and there were people who still wanted to do that. What was happening is they thought they could find a loophole in the law. So, men who wanted to have an affair would divorce their wife, trade them with another man for a season, then take them back as their wife later. It's kind of like the first century version of wife swapping. And Jesus says, "You guys aren't fooling anybody."



What He's saying in this passage is giving the heart behind it. He goes, "Hey, you are still causing destruction."

And so, Jesus is not saying that if you've been divorced, even if it was your fault, that you cannot ever remarry again, Jesus is saying, "Grace upon grace." Otherwise the whole conversation with the woman at the well would have been for naught.

So, He's raising the question:

Are there ever biblical grounds for divorce?

Now, we've already established that God hates divorce. And we've established His desire for marriage. So, here's the question. Is divorce ever allowed? Now, under the greater umbrella of this question would be simply this reality that we've already said. Marriage is not a contract, it's a covenant. So, since it is a covenant, biblically if a covenant is broken by an unrepentant, hardhearted person who refuses to change, then a divorce could be permitted as a last resort.

Adultery: Matthew 19

Abandonment: 1 Corinthians 7

Abuse: Exodus 21

Well, what breaks the covenant? Well, biblically and very simply three things: adultery, Matthew 19; Abandonment, 1 Corinthians 7; and Abuse, Exodus 21. Now, I want to be really, really clear here that God... I'm going to challenge us in a minute to endure and to hold on and let divorce be a last resort, but I want to be really, really clear that God does not ever require you to stay in an abusive situation: emotional, physical, or otherwise or to put up with unrepentant sin, ever. So, let me be super clear about that.

However, keeping in line with Jesus' own words here, you may have a biblical reason for a divorce. Can I just very lovingly say this? It should be the last resort and it doesn't mean you have to.

Part of the agony of being a pastor is walking alongside married couples going through something and they cannot forgive and they cannot humble themselves and they cannot resolve it and they end up divorcing even though you've worked with them. It's gut wrenching.

Part of the joy of being a pastor is working with a couple just as sinful, just as messed up, the same reasons for biblical grounds for divorce and they end up offering tender forgiveness, they work on it, there is humility that is demonstrated. And while they could divorce, biblically speaking, technically, they've got it but they refuse to give Satan the satisfaction. They let God redeem the broken pieces and as Isaiah said, bring beauty from the ashes.



My friend, Chip Ingram, said to me recently, "The answer to almost every issue in my marriage has been humility."

Can I just say this? Sometimes I've been in Christian circles where maybe a couple gets sideways with each other and they start to solely focusing on the fact that they've got biblical grounds for divorce and I just want to say this to you, if your spouse was looking for an out, like biblical grounds for divorce, they likely have it.

You can hear a pin drop right now. They likely have it. You've been married, I don't know, any more than two days, you could likely find biblical justification. You may be like, "What are you talking about, Pastor? I've never abused them. I've never committed adultery. I've never abandoned them." Yeah, but Jesus raises the bar when He says, "Whoever has looked lustfully at somebody has already committed adultery in their heart." Oh no.

Not to mention the fact that we've been unfaithful to God and His relationship with us is not contractual, it's covenantal.

I'm not saying you shouldn't get a divorce. I'm not saying that maybe that, painfully, it is what you must do. I am saying, let that be the very, very last resort. Divorce is devastating, but God is gracious

See, here's what I want you to know. Divorce is devastating, but God is so gracious. And while divorce is not always a sin, it is always the result of sin. And it's devastating to families and children and spiritual health and emotions and churches.

And if Satan cannot take a church down or slow the advancement of its mission from the outside in, (which he cannot, church history just proves the greater the pressure from the outside, the more the church explodes) what he'll do is he will attack from within by getting you to question your faith, or to attack marriages and weaken it from within.

And a church with strong, godly marriages is a church that takes ground for the Kingdom.

Maybe you are here today and you're hearing all of this and you're thinking, "Man, could God work in my life?" regardless of your marital status right now. "Could God work in my marriage?" "Could God work in my dating relationship?" "Could God work in my emotions?" "Could God redeem my situation, Aaron? It's pretty messy." "Could God heal what is broken in my life because I feel like things are too far gone? And it kind of feels like other people think that too."



And I want you to know that the answer to that is a resounding yes. Because Jesus didn't go to a cross for nothing. Jesus went to a cross to bring restoration and redemption and healing to your pain. And you are not your divorce. You are not your affair. You are not your addiction.

One of my favorite Psalms is Psalm 130, verses 3 through 4. It says this. The psalmist cried out:

"If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord who could stand?"

And the answer to that is nobody. Then the psalmist answers his own question: "But with you there is forgiveness..." (NIV)

There is forgiveness. And His power washes our soul with His mercy and His grace. Remember marriage is a reenactment of how much Jesus loves the church, of how much Jesus loves you. And Jesus knows what it is like to be in a difficult relationship with a self-absorbed, self-centered, sinful person who keeps cheating on Him, because He's in a relationship with Aaron Brockett. But what He did on the cross was not contractual, it was covenantal. Some of you have had a contractual relationship, not just with others in your life, but with God. We call that religion. And so, "God, if You will, I will. If I will, then You must." And God did not offer that. And some of us are like, "Well, God didn't keep His end of the contract, so I'm out."

But what God wants you to do is exchange the contract for the covenant, which is what He offered in the first place. And maybe some of you today need to put the contract in the drawer or better yet you need to shred it in a paper shredder and you need to accept the covenant that God died for you to have. Some of you today, you're at the end of your rope, man. You are here and I just want to lovingly and directly encourage you to fight, not one another, but for your marriage. I'm not asking you to endure abuse, I'm not asking you to overlook abandonment, I'm not asking you to take adultery lightly. I am encouraging you to endure for the glory of God and the good of others in your life.

And it may feel like you are panicking right now, doing everything you can to flee or get out of the situation.

I was talking to a friend of mine a couple of weeks ago who was talking to a guy who used to be a Navy Seal. And he was telling him about a water demolition training at BUD/S week where Navy Seals get trained. And he said that the most challenging one was where they end up getting their hands tied behind their back, and their ankles tied together and they get thrown into the deep end of a pool.



Now, I don't know about you, that sounds downright terrifying. If I were to get thrown into the deep end of a pool with my hands tied behind my back and my feet tied together, I would freak out and flail and probably inhale a whole bunch of water and I'd die right away.

I was thinking about this last week, if that happened to me, what would my first reaction be? My first reaction would be to flail around like a baby seal trying to get to the surface of the water. And that is actually counter intuitive to what you should do.

The Navy Seal said the guys who survived this demolition figure out how to control their mind and slow their body. And they do the counter intuitive thing. Instead of trying to fight to get to the surface, they sink. They allow themselves to sink to the bottom until their feet hit the ground and then they push up, just enough to where their heads break the surface of the water where they can take a breath and then they go down again and sink down to the bottom, push off, and take another breath. He said, actually if you can manage to calm yourself down, you can survive for about 24 hours doing that. It still sounds terrifying.

You do the counter intuitive thing. The Bible says you humble yourself. You allow yourself to sink. You're in over your head. And you trust that there is a God who can pull you up out of that situation until He makes the ground solid beneath your feet. And you can push up and take another breath.

Some of you are in a season of life and it feels that way. You're single and you don't want to be single. You want to marry somebody, you want to find somebody and you wonder if you'll ever find the one. You are tempted to compromise on some things because you don't want to be alone. Can I encourage you to do the counter intuitive thing and sink? Push off and take a breath. God's got you.

Some of you right now are in a season of life, maybe it's a marriage and you're trying to figure out and navigate your way through it and you are panicking. Could you just do the counter intuitive thing and humble yourself and sink? You get low. Push off. Take another breath.

Sometimes I wonder if our weekly worship gatherings are that little breath of air that we get as our head breaks the surface of the water just to inhale and then we go about the depths of our week until we get together again.

We want to just do what we did last week in continuation of this opening up the altar. If that word is unfamiliar to you, in the Old Testament it's where God's people would come just to make sacrifices to stay in relationship with God.



They would offload the baggage that they were carrying at the altar. So, this is just carpet and wiring and wood down here, but figuratively speaking it's an altar. There is something powerful about doing with your physical body what you feel emotionally and spiritually. So, we just want to open up the altar for whatever season of life that you are in, whatever you need prayer for.

And maybe right now you feel panicked and maybe right now you feel like your hands and feet are tied. Right now you need the wind of the Holy Spirit in your life. You don't know what to do. So, could we just open up the altar for whatever it is that you need to just come down front, to just fall on your knees, and pray before God and ask Him to help you, to meet you in this space. Maybe it's just to give you another breath for another week.

Maybe you're single right now and you just grab your friend group or a friend and say, "You know what? Can we go down to the altar and just pray that God would bring the right individual into our lives. But until then we would do things His way and guard our personal purity." Maybe right now just grab the hand of your spouse and come down front and you begin to pray.

Maybe you're like, "Hey, our marriage is rock solid." That's awesome. Still pray and ask that God would continue to guard that and that He would help navigate the marriages of others.

I don't know what it is for you. We've all got something we just need to lay before the altar before the King of kings.

We're going to worship together and I just want you to know that worship is war. We are glorifying God but then defiantly telling our enemy that we will endure to the glory of God and the joy of our covenant. So, if we're ever going to take ground for the Kingdom across Indy and beyond, it first starts by taking ground of our marriages. I just want to invite you to the altar for whatever it is. There is no shame. There is no guilt. There is no judgement. We're all in just as much need of God's grace. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for truth and grace. Forgive us when we try to emphasize one over the other or forget one over the other. God, I pray that right now we would recognize that You are a covenantal God who gives us what we do not deserve. So, I pray right now that you would meet us in this place in this tender moment, with tender hearts, raw emotions, and heavy stuff that we are walking through.



God, I pray that we might find what it is that we need by way of Your Spirit. Some of us feel bound, not physically, but emotionally and spiritually and we're freaking out, we're flailing trying to get to the top, trying to get a breath in our own way. I just pray that we could calm our minds and our hearts and do the counter intuitive thing and humble ourselves and sink so that You might lift us up in due time.

God, would You please do a transformational work right now in our lives, in our relationships, in our marriages" That can only be done by Your grace. So, would You meet us in the tenderness of this moment and do a work that only You can do to redeem. We ask this in the powerful and the precious name of King Jesus. And everybody says: Amen and Amen.

Hey, would you stand. We're going to worship. And you can come.

