

Topic	The Christian and Relationships
Reference	Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-9
Date	April 18 2021
Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

We are going to deal with a very important topic today, the topic of relationships. All right, so before we start, we'll have a word of prayer. Lord, we ask you this morning to grace us with your presence. We pray the Holy spirit be in our hearts and move our hearts as we explore your word, as your word is preached and spoken off it will stir us to respond in a way that will be glorifying to you. For ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Right this morning, we're going to talk about relationships. In the center of our relationship is our relationship with God, and if that has been transformed by God and the Holy Spirit, then the horizontal relationships that we have with each other will also be similarly be resolved. It will be normalized as to what it actually should be. So, when we look at our relationship to each other, we're actually looking at how they are transformed by our relationship with God. So relationships are important. So we've got contemporary attitudes to relationships, which is basically the Pharisees. They dare take on the law and then as Jesus commands, so you've got Jesus saying, you've heard that it was said to those of all, which means contemporary societies opinions. And then Jesus says, but I say to you. He sets a whole new paradigm.

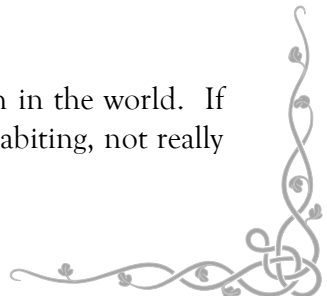
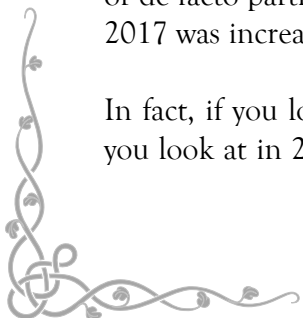
If the righteousness or the religiosity of the Pharisees was the highest echelon of perfection, Jesus pulls it a little bit further.

Matthew 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the contemporaries, which are the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, Jesus sets a new standard as it were. So, we're going to look at relationships and the core of all relationships in our existence in this world is basically the relationship between a man and his wife, which is why Genesis chapter one starts off with creation. Chapter 2 starts off with Adam and Eve together in the relationship, before we actually get into the destruction of relationship with sin. So therefore relationships are the most important thing. Now the passage deals with adultery, lust and all that, but we're going to be focusing on divorce and remarriage, because this is what is under siege all over the world. All over the world this is what is tearing the world apart. This is what tearing the church apart.

If you look at the divorces and marriage in Malaysia itself. There is some data, looking in our past few years, it's steadily rising. So, we are not very much different from the societal trends all over the world. We have people living together as well. The first British prime minister in history now has a live-in girlfriend or de facto partner and this is a study from the Institute of Family Studies in Canada and their headline in 2017 was increasing cohabitation is destabilizing the Canadian family.

In fact, if you look at the data here Quebec has one of the highest rates of cohabitation in the world. If you look at in 2001, there are about 25.2% of their total couples which are actually cohabiting, not really



married. In 10 years to 2011, it is 31%, much higher than the rest of Canada or the United Kingdom or the United States, but the rates are increasing and the problem is that, you've got this cohabitation is that you actually have families children being born out of marriage, out of this secure relationship, which is the nidus of the society, which is the family. 40% of the United States children, 30% of Canadian children are actually born outside marriage.

When you break up the traditional marital family structure, you have disfunction. This a slide taken from the United States where we look at arrests among adolescents by family structure. If you look at the arrest, 5% only occur in an intact married family. You don't have to be a good family or strong family as long as they're intact, they haven't divorced., okay, it is the lowest number of arrests. The rest of them, 8% married but step-family, 8% in intact cohabiting family, 13% cohabiting step family, single divorced parent family, 9% and 13% single parent family.

So this matters. When the relationships break down, when the basic marriage unit breaks down, the people who actually are casualties are not only the couple, are basically also the children. 2015 to 2018 looking at the marital trends in the United States. Same-sex couple couples cohabiting rose by 50%, same sex married couples rose by 200%. All right. Why does it matter? Look at these trends in the United States. Looking at 1960 to 1990, the crime rate is climbing in the same proportion as children living in single parent families. As families break out the fallout causes crime. For every 10% increase in single parent families, there is a reciprocal 17% rise in violent team crime. So as families break down, the people who are disenfranchised are actually the children. Look at the most famous court case that is actually going on. You can switch on CNN or BBC, you actually can catch this trial live.

Some time ago, this police officer Derek Shovan subdued this man, George Floyd, six foot four of him and he put his knee on to his neck. Three minutes after he actually died. And this is going through a court case and you're going to get noticed, both of them were children divorced. George Floyd's family divorced when he was 2 and Derek Shovan actually family divorced at the age of 7.

Children from divorced families and remarried are 91% more likely to be divorced as well. How do we solve this problem? Write a check. Right. Data from the US shows that since 1965 welfare spending has increased 80% and you'd expect the crime to go down, right? No, the crime actually rose three times, even though you spend 80% more. You can't throw money at the situation because this problem lies at the core of the relationship between man and a woman. In fact, Senator Phil Gramm actually said,

if social spending stopped crime, we would be the safest country in the world.

And you know what America having a mass shooting every day, this is not so. It is the breakup of the family. This is Laurence Jacobs, in Melbourne in 2014 at the World Congress of Families, and he actually said that the breakdown of the families is to blame for 90% of the poverty, right. When a family breaks down. We have to find the truth. And the truth is there is statistically no better place for a child than a conventional family. 90% of poverty can be addressed by simply affirming the sanctity of marriage, which is why we have this talk today in the Sermon of Mount, because Christians, for us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it has to begin at the core of society. It has to begin at a core of the church and the core of the church is actually the family, the married couple together.

So today we're going to look at marriage and divorce in the eyes of Jesus, not in the eyes of the Pharisees or contemporary societies and trends, we have to got to look at marriage and divorce in the eyes of God. There are only three points I want to put forward, which are fairly simple today.

- First of all, divorce needs to be seen in the light of marriage, not divorce on its own.
- Marriage needs is a calling, it is not a right.
- Marriage is transformed by the cross.

A DIVORCE MUST BE SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF MARRIAGE:

We are looking at things in the wrong perspective. The Pharisees at the time, they represented contemporary attitudes towards marriage and divorce, and all they were focus on was permission for divorce. In fact, Jesus addressed this in verse 31-32.

It was also said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

They were bringing up this issue as Jesus brings up this issue of the certificate of divorce. Then in Matthew chapter 19, same gospel people came up to him, Pharisees came up to him and tested Jesus by asking, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause. Now they're testing him. Yes, there is divorce. Yes, we can divorce, but what are the grounds for divorce? Right. So basically, we've got two schools of thought at that time; right wing and left wing. Totally left wing is basically the Hillel School, and they were the liberal scholars. They said you could divorce for any reason. The Shammai School were the conservative right-wing school. And they said, no, you couldn't do that. You can only divorce under very strict circumstances and that's basically marital infidelity. Who is right? So they pull Jesus into this debate to gain traction. And they looked at the Deuteronomy 24 passage and the Deuteronomy 24 passage is very simple. It wasn't designed for all this. It was just designed by Moses because of the sinfulness of man and what he said, if man A marries wife A and unfortunately, they have a divorce. She runs off to Man B and gets married to Man B. Okay, unfortunately, the guy dies and so therefore she runs back to Man A and Moses said, no you can't remarry this woman because of the particular divorce, otherwise you trivialized the divorce.

And here you actually have, the interpretation of indecency,

Deut 24:1 When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house.

So therefore, what they're doing is that they're looking at, you can divorce. There is a certificate of divorce. I know Genesis says they get married, but Deuteronomy says there is a certificate of divorce. Now and then the Pharisees homed in. When can you actually divorce? Well, when she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some indecency in her. Now that leaves you room for interpretation. Right? So what they did was, this is writings from the Mishnah, which is a commentary on Jewish thought that at time, Rabbi Aqiba says,

“Even if he found someone who is prettier than she, “since it is said, And it shall be if she finds no favor in his eyes”.

And they looked at Deuteronomy 24 and they just took the part where she finds no favor in his eyes. They say, if someone is prettier than my wife then I will marry that someone else. Then here we actually have Mishnah Gittin 9:10, house of Hillel (liberal school),

“Even if she spoiled his dish, “since it is said, Because he has found in her indecency in anything.

Which means she has cooked an indecent meal, she destroyed your dinner. That is grounds for divorce. All right. Titus Flavius Josephus, this is a very famous historian who writes a lot of stuff that we know about,

At this period I divorced my wife, being displeased at her behavior. She had borne me three children...afterwards I married a woman of Jewish extraction.

You see how they have distorted what scripture has said. This is a LPPKN study in Malaysia, 2014-2015, looking at the causes of divorce or separation in marriages. First marriages between the age of 15 and 59 and they looked at the reasons cited by the males and the reasons cited for female.

Number one cause is lack of understanding between the spouse.

- 56.2 of the men say, my wife don't understand me lah, that is why I must divorce her.
- 38.2% of the women said that the men don't understand me. That's why I have to divorce him.

So this is actually quite frivolous. It's not exactly spoiling your dinner, but it comes quite close. The lack of understanding between the spouse. Now you talk about infidelity, you can find 20.5% of the women said that the spouse cheated of them, 11.8% of the men said their spouse has cheated on her, so take notice men you are twice more likely to cheat on your spouse than the women. All right.

Meddling is unique to Chinese or to Asian culture, meddling by family and in-laws 6% women complain of that and 10% of the men complain of that. So in laws should stay out, they should be outlaws.

Irresponsible spouse, it is interesting. 15% of women said their spouse was irresponsible, never bring home the bread or take the bread and spend somewhere else. None of the men actually complain of that. Then there are other miscellaneous reasons. So these are fairly trivial reasons that our society actually brings up for divorce. And the most trivialization was some years ago, when the certain people decided to get divorced by this SMS, I divorce you three times, Love Ahmed. Isn't it love? Right?

So Jesus addresses this problem. He plunges in. It doesn't matter what society says, but I want to look at what Jesus says. He doesn't deny divorce. He says,

whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce, but he said, everyone who divorces his wife except on the grounds of sexual immorality makes her commit adultery, whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

So therefore, he is saying divorce is a no-no under any circumstances except there is one ground of exception. It is a ground of sexual immorality. You see, he sees divorce in the light of marriage. Matthew 19:6, where they come up and talk to him about divorce, straight away instead of talking about divorce, you know what he did, he says they are no longer two by one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate. So what does Pharisees were coming up to Jesus for. First thing they ask is about divorce, Jesus points them back to the main thing. They're actually focusing on the peripheral thing. They've lost the plot. They're more interested in divorce than actual marriage.

You see sin is always seen or cast in the light of the original intent. Sin in the garden of Eden is always in chapter 3. It is not in chapter one or chapter two, because chapter one talks about the beauty of the entire creation, chapter 2 talks about the beauty of the garden in which God has specifically designed to give delight, enjoyment of men and woman. And then he brings them both together. Only in chapter three, we mark it up and basically sin comes. So sins needs to see in that light to know its enormity.

It is like Eve, all she can see in the garden of Eden, all she can see is basically the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Every morning, wake up, see, that's all I can see. She cannot see the rest. When God said you can eat from any fruit of any tree of this entire huge garden, she misses that and sin is always focusing on the wrong thing.

Paulo Coelho, who's basically a well-known novelist actually writes,

A life spent resisting temptations is a wasted life.

And that's him focusing on the exception rather than the norm. Sin rather than what God has given. In fact, it was very interesting during this pandemic. In Malaysia, you complain that, if you are caught without a mask or social distancing, you get a \$10,000 fine. In the Philippines, they made this man go up and down holding his ears 300 times until he died. A law which was supposed to save lives, ends up killing people.

So divorce is a provision because of sin. Jesus said,

Matthew 19:7 Because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning it was not so.

So Jesus focuses our attention not on divorce, but on the actual institution of marriage. Divorce is of provision. It's a concession because of sin. Let's look at the original provision in Matthew chapter nine, verse four onwards.

He answered them, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning..."

Which means marriage is actually a God given creation ordinance. It is not a social contract. God made men and women and suddenly they got together and they say, "I like you, you like me, we have a contract. We live together that we have some children. We don't like we split." No. Right from the beginning creation ordinance is given by God. And number two, he created them from the beginning. He made

them male and female. Number two, it is complimentary. Marriage is complimentary is not same sex. It is different sex. Number three,

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and holdfast to his wife.

It's permanent. It is not temporary. He doesn't go back to his mother and father is exclusive. He holds on to his wife. He doesn't hold on to his mother-in-law. He holds onto his wife, is permanent, is exclusive and it's nuclear. They form the basis of a new family that will propagate in society.

So they are no longer two but one flesh and what God has joined together let not man separate

Which meant Jesus is saying, this is a divine ordinance. You are not supposed to separate them. Unless Jesus gives the exception clause. Now, Christians are divided. Good Christians are divided all over the world. No need to fight about it. All right. We need to respect each other's views.

- There are those who will say there is no divorce and no new remarriage at all. That's fine.
- There are those who say you can divorce, but no remarriage.
- Then there's those who say you can divorce on biblical grounds and then remarry.
- Then there are those who are basically saying you can divorce in marriage. Just like the Hillel school under any other causes.

Now I want to go through these views very quickly. The actual topic is a little bit more complicated, but let's take it from this passage itself. First of all, we look at this passage, divorce and remarriage under any circumstance like the Hillel School is actually not on, because Jesus didn't say it. He didn't affirm the Hillel school. He didn't say you could divorce your wife because you found her cooking indecent. All right.

Now the other issue is that, well, I don't believe you can have a view where you have no divorce and no remarriage at all, because Jesus actually mentioned the exception clause very clearly in chapter 5 and chapter 19, both in the same gospel. Jesus says to you,

Whoever divorces what, except for the immorality and marries another commits adultery.

There is an exception clause. Why? Because of the hardness of man's heart.

This is chapter 5, except on the grounds of immorality. So Matthew writes it twice. Okay. And the reason of sexual immorality, the Greek word is basically porneia and porneia is actually any extra marital sexual activity, any one flesh experience which is outside your wife, which is premarital sex, incest, sexual sins that destroy a marital covenant, covers homosexuality, sex with animals, sex with anybody else other than your wife is covered by the word porneia and you destroy the marriage relationship with this.

Now there are two other gospels, Mark and Luke, which are primarily written for more gentile influence audiences, which actually don't mention it.

Mark 10:11B, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

But no mention of sexually morality. Luke chapter 16 verse 18. Luke is a doctor. He writes,

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Scholars will look, hey there is no exception clause here, but you know, in Greco-Roman society, divorce and remarriage are usually universally permitted, especially mandatory when there is actual adultery. So therefore, just because they don't mention it doesn't mean that this exception clause does not apply. Because Mathew mentions it twice. And so therefore you bring it together, these four gospels, it is still coherent.

So, we're going to look at when you divorce, can you remarry or not?

Matthew 5:32 But I say to you, everyone who divorces his wife except on the grounds of sexual immorality makes her commit adultery. Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Which means it is actually in the remarriage that has adultery, not if you divorce and then you didn't remarry. There is no adultery involved. It's the remarriage that causes adultery. But if you look back in Jewish times where the Pharisees and Sadducees were operating, remarriage is implicit in a divorce. The whole idea of getting divorce is so that you could remarry. This is divorce writ which is taken.

On the twentieth day of Sivan, year three of the freedom of Israel...I Shelamzion, daughter of Joseph Qebshan from Ein Gedi, with you, you Eleazar son of Hananiah, who had been my husband before this time, that this is for you from me a bill of divorce and release...

The bill of divorce comes with release. This is another one from Mishnah Gittin 9:3

R Judah says, “Let this be from me your writ of divorce, letter of dismissal, and deed of liberation, that you may marry anyone you want.”

So therefore divorce automatically comes with re-marriage. This is Paul. Now Paul also subscribes to this because he says in 1-Corinthians chapter 7 verse 15,

But if the unbelieving partner separates, which means divorce, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

Don't go fight about it. What does he mean about not enslaved? Well, if you go a few verses further up. He says in verse 10,

To the married, I give you this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband 11 (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

Which means when Paul talks about being enslaved, he means that divorce comes at remarriage because if he wanted them not to remarry, verse 10, he would specify. If she does, she should remain unmarried. Right. If Paul said divorce means no remarriage, he would have stated specifically what we did. Right? So therefore, we are looking at divorce only on biblical grounds and remarriage in that situation. Now let's get that pass. I'm going to focus on more important things.

Marriage is a calling. It is not a right. The disciples said to him, if such a case you can only divorce only in sexual immortality, it is better not to marry. Why were the disciples shocked? Because unhappy marriage we're trapped for life, every morning wake up, look at your face, you look at my face. We are not happy. Is this for life? So in that case, better not marry. Divorce gives you options. Prenuptial give you options. Family trusts give you option. You can protect your wealth. What you're doing is that this is, you know, what you're doing is closing the back door. He is closing the back door, which is terrible for the average contemporary person. You see marriage Jesus is saying is not for everyone, is not a right. For example chapter 19 verse 12.

For these are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.

So what he means is that, marriage is not for everyone because there are people who are single from genetic causes, born, sometimes you are born and you look at the genitalia don't know whether male or female, you're going to scratch your head, and then the doctor is going to make this horrible decision, whether you're male or female, or you're traumatic, if you happen to work like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Persian Emperors court. Most of the court officials were eunuchs, they actually cut off their genitalia. Why? Because they don't want you looking at the Empress.

Or the last one, the people who basically are eunuchs of the Kingdom, because the agenda for the kingdom is so important. They don't have time. John the Baptist was a single person. Jesus never married and Phillip actually had four unmarried daughters who were basically prophetesses. So singlehood is an option. Now the tension that is baked into marriage has already seen in Genesis chapter two, two shall be become one flesh and in Genesis chapter three, we have the consequences of sin. The consequence of sin is that, for the woman, your desire will be for your husband. It's not sexual desires, it is desire to dominate because the same word is used in Genesis chapter four, where sin wants to desire to overwhelm men. So your desire will be to basically control your husband and he will rule over you. So, you have got two competing desires, the detention is baked into marriage, which makes it very very difficult.

Marriage is a calling. Paul calls it a calling. When he is talking about marriage in 1-Corinthians chapter 17, he says,

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

He is saying that every single one of you out there in Zoom, there is a calling, there's an assignment and your assignment may be marriage. It is not a right. That mean, I wake up, I'm a man and you're a woman. So definitely we have a right. We have a God-given right, and if God didn't give me a wife, I get upset. I won't pray to him anymore. No marriage is a calling. Look at the situation to discern your calling. If you are a single person, look at your situation. Chapter 7, verse 26 to 29,

I think in the view of the present distress, which means difficult times in the world, it is good for the person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Are you single? Don't seek to be free? Are you free from wife, don't seek a wife, but if do marry you haven't sin and if a betrothed woman marry she has not sinned.

So therefore there is a situation when you look at and you can discern your calling. But Paul is probably the only person who has a realistic view of that. Everybody else sings you the song and dance, you find your soul mate, you'll be happily ever after. If you did live happily ever after means you chose the wrong person. Right. But if you look at what Paul says, those who marry will have worldly trouble and this is not just financial. It is interpersonal where your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. And I would spare you that. This is what I mean brothers, the appointed time has grown short.

You know the time that we have to serve God on earth is so short, don't spend it fighting with each other. Those who marry will have worldly trouble. I will spare you of that. So today instead of regarding marriage as a calling, we actually remake weddings and marriages according to our own image. How do we do that? When you look at the modern marriage, they each sit down and spend days writing their own script, writing their own vows. They don't want to say I will. I will obey the husband. They don't want to say in sickness and health till death do us part and all we'll say something else, it is couched in romantic language. And that's what we are trying to do. We're trying to remake marriage according to our own image. We want to look at the spouse, we want to look at person and that's the only personnel which will place all our hopes of happiness, procreation, fulfillment, companionship and sexual satisfaction, everything that is what marriage is about.

The marriage is focused about what effect the person has on me. I'm married because I'm looking for personal happiness and fulfillment. That's the nature of what marriage is in today's society. Let's look at the popular culture. Movies, eat, pray, love, Julia Roberts. The soulmate you're looking for will cause you to change. So you'll never be the same. A true soulmate is probably the most important person you will ever meet. Why? Because it will tear down your walls and smack you awake. You you'll be awake. You'll be enlightened. You'll be awakened to a new dimension of life. Your whole world will come apart, it will blossom. Will marriage do that for you?

Finding your soulmate, this is an old movie, Jack Nicholson and Helen Hunt. As good as gets, "Marriage will make you a better person." You make me want to be a better man. He is a horrible man, Jack Nicholson and because of Helen Hunt, she makes him want to be a better man. Fools Rush In by Janice Thompson, a movie, "you're everything I never knew I always wanted." Wow, isn't that romantic? So you

need girls. You need to find somebody out there who will basically, you know, make you want to be everything that I never knew I wanted.

What about Dawson's Creek? What's a soulmate? A person who knew you, excepted you, believe in you before anyone else did or when no one else would.

You see the kind of pressure you place on your husband, on your soulmate? It is marriage reconfigured to find the soul mate, which means even if you watch movie on Netflix with your wife and then she will turn around and say to you, Hey, actually husband now you're not my soulmate. You're very far from what this is describing? So this must not be a good marriage, right? Because it is a wrong premise for a marriage to be on. Here's a soulmate checklist. Okay. Which you tick young people before you get married;

- The person must help you build self-awareness.
- Asks thought provoking questions.
- Gives to us without expectation.
- Sparks meaningful conversations.
- Helps us love and accept ourselves.
- Show appreciation to us.

You see, this is all about us. We look at the idealized couple in Netflix and we reimagine ourselves like them. That's perfect. If I've only found the correct person that will be us, but that's a totally unrealistic image of what marriage is because sooner or later, my husband disappoints me all the time. Our vision is clouded by our own needs and expectation. What we were doing is that, we are looking at that person and we are projecting all our needs and expectations to that other sinful person and expecting that person to meet all of that. And then marriage becomes a entire negotiation period where you try to meet my needs, I meet your needs, because you meet my needs and it's a battle on and off. And you can take this from the longest married couple in the United Kingdom, Philip and Elizabeth, loved marriage, and you know on the 50th anniversary what he said,

“Tolerance is the one essential ingredient of any happy marriage.”

That's the closest ideal to what Paul said in life. You will have trouble. Marriage is a calling. Verse 39 of chapter 7,

A wife is bound to husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom he wishes, but only in the Lord.

If marriage is so difficult, you actually get married because marriage is the lens through which we see Christ and the church. And so then how can you see that lens? How can that marriage of yours be the lens through which society can see a reconciliation and forgiveness. If you are married to a person who is not of the Lord. So marriage is a calling, so I'm not going to have anybody come and tell me, Oh, I married a person because I liked the person. He fulfills me a soulmate, but what Paul is saying you marry in the Lord because that is your calling.

We need to differentiate between a disappointing, difficult marriage and a destructive marriage. The exception clause which Jesus gives in Matthew chapter 19 is a destructive marriage when you've got infidelity or the threat to life and limb. In that particular case, yes divorce is in the picture because of the sinfulness of man. But the important thing is that most marriages have disappointing times and difficult times that we need to be able to differentiate between them.

Marriage needs to be seen in the light of your overall kingdom commitments, verse 29 and 31. Paul says,

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as if they have none, and those who mourn as though they were not in mourning and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing and those who buy as if they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with the world for the present form of this world is passing.

So therefore we are, at the end times, people are going to get more evil. The need for the gospel of the kingdom is so great that we actually have to reconfigure our marriages in such a way or our lives in such a way as to have the overriding priority is the kingdom of God. So, marriage as a calling needs to be seen in the context of the kingdom of God.

My last point is marriage is transformed by the cross. There's nothing like this in the world. You see the problem of marriage is the hardness of heart, sin. Your desire, the wife would be for your husband and he will rule over you. Marriage is hard. This is always the underlying dynamic. How do we solve it? Well, if you're a psychologist, you look at all the studies you will see whether you actually find the right husband, maybe you will find the right husband and wife then there will be a new divorce, or maybe you should date for a longer period of time. Here's some data from the West, which I've gotten. This is duration of dating before proposal. If you date for one to two years, that's the 20% less likely to divorce. If you date for three years or more, 39% less likely to divorce.

What about income level? Do you know that the higher income level, the less likely you are to divorce? So those who earn 125,000 as a couple are less likely to divorce. What about the people attending your wedding? You will find that this is the more people attend your wedding, the less chance you've got to divorce. If 200 people come and attend your wedding, you're 92% less chance of getting divorced, which was church wedding very good because at least 300 of us. And what about spending on wedding. So, if you were to spend 10 to 20,000 or more 20,000, you're probably less likely the more likely to get divorced, if you spend too much on the wedding then you start to fight about it. Right. What about honeymoons? Do you know that divorce is less likely if there was a honeymoon. No honeymoons, stingy fella more likely to get divorced. All right. So that's what the world does. It looks at statistics and you try to avoid all this right.

In the Old Testament, Moses certificate of divorce, protect the women. In the New Testament is the cross. The cross is actually the game changer. Absolute game changer in any marriage. Here is Paul. He adds to what Jesus says.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother, holdfast to his wife. The two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound and I'm saying that refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself and the wife see that she respects her husband.

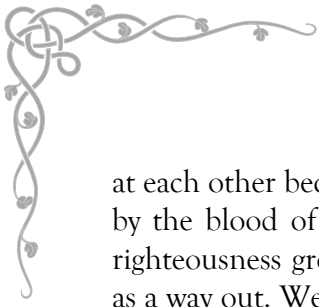
So what he's saying is that today. All right. The picture of marriage is the lens through which the world will see Christ and the church. Now, when you look at Christ and the church, it is like the most perfect person in the entire world, more handsome than Brad Pitt, and he marries the ugliest person in the world. Why? Because we at a church are horrible, horrible sinners. And how could he marry us? Right. See, when we look at marriage to all the handsome fellow, Korean style married the beautiful woman. No, no, no. The picture of marriage is Christ, the perfect God marrying the imperfect church and making that church perfect because of his love.

Christian relationships are no longer based on intrinsic worthiness of every single person, but the pattern set by Christ. When I look at my wife, I look, my friend, I look at my brother, I don't look at them and base my response to them based on the intrinsic worthiness, whether they are good enough, whether they are handsome enough or whether they treated me right. I look at them based on what Christ has done, which means the cross gives us a picture of marriage as one by sacrifice forged by forgiveness, enabled by grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit. That is the picture of the New Testament Christian Church, that kind of marriage only that kind of marriage will be a salt of the earth and the light of the world.

So therefore, when you have a Christian couple they're like covered by the blood of Christ. Underneath this cloak of Christ, the husband sacrifices, why? Not because the wife didn't cook a good dinner or whatever, or how beautiful she is, the husband sacrifices because Christ's sacrifice. Like he was a useless, hopeless sinner and Christ died for him. And so therefore, when he looks at his wife, he loves her and sacrifices for her based on what Christ has done. And as she looks at her husband, and she submits to the husband as if the husband is Christ, because of what Christ has done for her and sacrificed, so she belongs to him. So, she owes allegiance and submission.

So therefore Christ and the cross covers the marriage. And if you are divorced, which is the sad reality of life, stay single. If you're not biblically divorced, repent and remain single for the kingdom of God. If you are already divorced and remarried, and it was an unbiblical divorce, it wasn't for just sexual immorality. We need to repent of that and remain faithful to your current wife. So, all of us as Christian couples, we are called. Our divine calling assignment to us is to be that kind of couple that will reflect the most important thing, grace and forgiveness.

We're not perfect. You know, as Christians, we walk around and sometimes we feel a bit reticent or afraid to share our testimony because the world look at us, we still fight with our wives. We still have sin. We still have shortcomings. And the non-Christians will be the first person to come up and tell us about our sin and then we try to be hypocrites and live up to that particular image. But the most important thing that actually happens in our life, that they cannot see replicated in any religious system is that they cannot see grace. They cannot see forgiveness in any other system except Christianity because ours is the faith forged by grace and forgiveness. So when we look at our lives and wives or wives look at husbands, we don't look and see all the past hurts, insults, time he let you down, we don't see all that. What we see is how Christ forgave gave us. We don't see and assess each other based on how each of our intrinsic worthiness, we look



at each other because of what Christ has done and we respond to that person as if that person was covered by the blood of Christ. And with that kind of Christ filled marriage then only can we actually have a righteousness greater than that of the Pharisees and Sadducees, because they were just looking at divorce as a way out. We need to look at the true purpose of marriage transformed by the cross because of the one magic word, “forgiveness”. We're not perfect, but we need to forgive.

