

JESUS ON MARITAL COMMITMENT MATTHEW 19:1-12

Passage Brief: It is no coincidence that Matthew places Jesus' teaching on marital commitment after a passage on forgiveness (18:21-35). The more intimate the relationship, the deeper the wounds of interpersonal friction sear; marriage without forgiveness and reconciliation would be difficult or impossible.

Discussion Questions

1. What were the Pharisees trying to do according to v.3? _____

Understanding the question: There were two schools of teaching in Israel regarding divorce. One school taught that a man could divorce his wife on the grounds of adultery. The second taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason so long as he gave her a certificate of divorce. This was a matter of controversy in Jesus' time.

2. The Pharisee's question is about: a. Divorce and dissolution of marriage b. Marital commitment
Jesus' answer (v.4-6) is about: a. Divorce and dissolution of marriage b. Marital commitment
Circle the correct answers.

3. Given your answer to question 2, what should our approach should be to questions of marriage, separation and divorce?

4. Does Jesus see a marriage union as simply a covenant or promise between two people (a human institution) or does he see the marriage union as something that God does (a divine institution)? (see v.4-6)

5. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4. These verses assume that divorce is going to happen. But what is the real concern of these verses?

6. Now read Matthew 19:7. How have the Pharisees twisted the command of Moses?

7. From Matthew 19:8, was Moses assumption that divorce would take place based on God's creation or on man's sin?

8. What grounds would Jesus allow for a divorce? (v.9) _____

9. The words 'marital unfaithfulness' (NIV) refer specifically to sexual sin (fornication). What does this tell us about the significance of the sexual relationship in marriage?

10. Given the teaching of Jesus in v.4-6 do you think sexual unfaithfulness should mean an automatic divorce?

11. In v.10 the disciples seem to think that given Jesus' teaching on marriage it seems better to stay single. Marriage is a huge risk! In v.11 Jesus replies 'Not everyone can accept (or receive) *this word*'. What *word* is Jesus referring to? The best answer is to understand it refers back to the quote from Genesis 'A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife'. In other words he means that no, marriage is not for everyone. (Note: It is possible that he is referring back to the disciples words in v.10) Who might it not be appropriate for?

12. How does this study impact your view of your own marriage (if you are married) or of marriage generally (if you are not)?
