

# ***“Marriage: Divorce”***

**Matthew 19:3-12**

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Four Lakes Church of Christ



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## **Introduction:**

Over the past few weeks, we have been looking together at what the Bible has to say on the subject of marriage. We started several weeks ago by considering several verses in **Genesis 2**, where we discovered that marriage was designed by God, it involves a permanent union, and it is the most intimate of all human relationships. We then continued by looking together at the distinct roles of men and women within marriage as outlined by the apostle Paul in **Ephesians 5**. We learned that wives are to respect and submit to their husbands and that husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loved the church. And then last week we looked together at what Peter had to say about overcoming turbulence in a marriage. According to the apostle Peter in **1 Peter 3:8-9**, we are to “...***be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but [we are to give] a blessing instead.***”

This morning I would like for us to study a topic that has come up a number of times over the past nine years that we have been in Madison. In several Bible classes as well as in private, a number of people have continued to ask for a lesson on what the Bible teaches on the subject of ***marriage*** and ***divorce***. As I started doing the research for this morning's lesson, I looked at my records and realized that the last time I preached a sermon exclusively on this subject was way back on Sunday morning June 6, 2004. So, it has been nearly five years. And yet over the past five years we know that the subject of divorce has continued to be a relevant issue. In fact, it would probably be safe to say that most, if not all, of the people in this room have been personally touched by divorce—maybe in your own life, but if not, then certainly in the life of a close friend or a loved one.

If you know me, then you know that divorce has also affected my life in a very personal way. Not only has someone very close to me gone through a divorce, but I was the one who performed the wedding ceremony in the first place. Several years later, I was then the one who received a phone call in the middle of the night, and I was the one who picked her up by the side of the road in the dark as she escaped from a terrifying situation—a situation that in many ways began when I said the words, “***I now pronounce you husband and wife.***” I am merely pointing out that divorce has affected all of us in some very personal ways.

And yet in spite of the pain that it causes, the world around us continues to basically ignore the word of God on this very important issue. We know that this ignorance

goes back for thousands of years. It even goes back to the Old Testament, where people were constantly leaving their wives, and it got to the point where God had to just come right out and say it (in **Malachi 2:16**), ***"I hate divorce!"*** For those who have been through it, then perhaps you know why God made such a severe statement. But even though this is true, we can go over into the New Testament (especially in **Matthew 19**), **»PPT»** and we see that the Jewish Pharisees were also promoting a culture of easy divorce. In that society, for example, a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all—if he did not like her cooking, if she burned the toast, even if a he found another woman more attractive—he could divorce her with God's approval. And that was the popular view at the time of Christ. The Pharisees, however, knew that Jesus did not take the popular view, and so there was a time in the ministry of Christ (in **Matthew 19**), where the Pharisees tried to embarrass the Lord in front of a huge crowd of people. They wanted people to be shocked by His harsh teaching so that they would leave Him—at least that was their plan. This morning, I would invite you to look with me at **Matthew 19**. In our pew Bibles, the passage is found on **page 1534**. We will start with **verses 3-9—Matthew 19:3-9...**

***<sup>3</sup> Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" <sup>4</sup> And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, <sup>5</sup> and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." <sup>7</sup> They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" <sup>8</sup> He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. <sup>9</sup> And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."***

As we consider this very sensitive subject, we realize that the Lord's will can be understood. And even though it is a very emotional subject, we understand there is a difference between being guided by emotion and being guided by the word of God. And so as we study, I would like for us to start by looking at this conversation very carefully, and then I would like for us to move on by considering several of the major objections that we normally hear concerning what Jesus actually said.

In any study such as this, I realize that it is impossible to cover every question, but as we study, I would invite you to take the insert from this morning's bulletin and use it to write down any special questions or concerns that you might have. I would invite you to give it back to me after the service or put it in my mailbox—and I will be glad to get back with you, or perhaps if we have enough questions we can study it again in the near future. I should also point out that there is a packet of information on this subject in the mailboxes this morning, and if you are visiting with us there are extra copies on the table in the entryway.

I. **First of all, though, LET US LOOK VERY CAREFULLY AT THIS CONVERSATION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE LEADING PHARISEES.**

»PPT»

In **verse 3**, we notice the test question, *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”* We have the Pharisees trying to trick Jesus into saying something very unpopular. And right away, it is interesting to me that if someone wants to be justified in divorcing for any reason at all, you can always find someone out there in the religious world who will say, **“Go for it!”** I mean, these are the Pharisees—they were stricter than strict—and yet even a majority of them were saying that a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all.

However, we notice that Jesus is not afraid, because in **verses 4-5** the Lord takes them back even before the Law of Moses—all the way back to the beginning—as the Lord quotes directly from **Genesis 1:27** and **Genesis 2:24**. As we learned here several weeks ago, a man and a woman were to leave their parents, they were to be joined to one another, they were to become one flesh, and they were to remain married until they were separated only by death. And so Jesus says, **“Have you not read”** this? In other words, the issue of marriage and divorce is not to be left up to human discussion and debate—this is not something we can simply take a vote on, but God has something to say about it. In **verse 6**, Jesus said that God had joined them together, and because God had done the joining, no human being had a right to break up that marriage—only God has that right.

At this point, we see that the Pharisees do not like that answer, so they begin arguing with the Lord. In **verse 7**, they say to Him, **“Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?”** And here we have the paperwork—the same idea in our society—as long as you put your name on the right papers and as long as the lawyers get paid, you can get divorced for any reason at all. But we notice in **verse 8** that Jesus caught them in their own trickery, because He corrected them as He said, **“Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.”** Please notice—there is a huge difference between Moses **“commanding”** a divorce and Moses **“permitting”** a divorce. And so the Lord pointed out that they were not even really following the Law of Moses.

Jesus, therefore, under the New Law, takes us all the way back to the ideal that God had planned from the beginning—one man and one woman are joined together by God and are to be married for a lifetime. And then we come to **verse 9**. »PPT» In **verse 9**, we find that God allows only one thing to separate a husband and wife. We look at this, and we see the wisdom of God. From our own experience, we know the deep feelings of betrayal that sin can bring. We see here that God understands what we are going through, because according to Jesus, the only cause for a divorce and subsequent remarriage is **“sexual immorality.”** The Greek word is **“PORNEIA,”** and various English translations translate the word as **“fornication, sexual immorality, or marital unfaithfulness.”** We know what this means! The word itself refers to prostitution, fornication, or any other kind of unlawful sexual intercourse—heterosexual, homosexual, or even relations with an animal.

Jesus, then, draws a very small circle around the one cause, and by necessity any cause outside of this circle is not a valid reason for divorce. In fact, Jesus says that the person who divorces and remarries for any reason other than this one cause ***“commits adultery.”*** To help us understand it a little better, perhaps we could imagine taking the exception out. Without the exception, Jesus says, ***“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery.”*** That is pretty easy to understand. Without the exception, Jesus would have outlawed any divorce and remarriage under any circumstances. But as it is, the Lord allows it (does not command it, but allows it) under only one condition—not because we fall out of love with each other, not because we can no longer get along, not because we argue all the time, not because they hurt our feelings, not because we find someone younger and prettier, not because she burns the toast, but for one cause.

Jesus, therefore, made a very unpopular statement as He gave only one reason for a marriage to be dissolved (other than death): When one of the partners commits sexual immorality against the other. When that happens, the one who has been sinned against (the partner who is innocent of the sexual sin)—this partner has God’s permission to divorce the one who is guilty, and the innocent person can then remarry. This, of course, was very different from what was being taught in the First Century, and it is also very different from what is being taught in the world around us even today.

## **II. With the Lord’s words in mind, therefore, I would like for us to spend the rest of our time this morning looking at SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR OBJECTIONS TO WHAT THE LORD HAS SAID. »PPT»**

As with many other parts of the Bible, people have done everything in their power to avoid the impact of this passage. Many people have looked for loopholes (or ways around) this one exception to a lifelong marriage. So at this time I would like for us to move on and consider some of the most common arguments that I have personally heard over the years.

### **A. First of all, some people have said, “Baptism washes away the sin of adultery; therefore, someone could divorce for any reason, get remarried, get baptized, and then continue living in that second marriage.” »PPT»**

I have actually heard it argued that someone could get divorced and remarried a hundred times (not for the reason Jesus gives in **verse 9**), and when they are baptized they simply need to stay with the one they are with at the time. We need to understand, though, what is meant by the word ***“adultery.”*** The word ***“adultery”*** refers to having unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another person. This is the primary definition of the word. You might remember the woman in **John 8** who was ***“caught in the very act of adultery.”*** Adultery, therefore, is not the marriage ceremony itself that starts off that second marriage, adultery is not simply breaking the covenant with the first spouse, but adultery is the unlawful intercourse that takes place in that second relationship. Adultery is primarily and literally a sexual word.

When you look at **verse 9**, you notice that Jesus uses three verbs, ***“divorces,”*** ***“marries,”*** and ***“commits adultery.”*** The first two refer to a specific act that is done at one point in time. There is a time when the divorce happens, there is a time when the second marriage ceremony takes place, but the tense of the verb changes with that third verb and it refers to an action that continues. The adultery, therefore, is an act that is ongoing.

When we look at God’s plan of salvation, then, we get to the need for repentance. Repentance means that we turn around—we have a change of mind that results in a change of lifestyle. Repentance means that the adultery needs to stop. Repentance means that the two people involved in that new marriage can no longer live together and enjoy the intimate benefits of that relationship. Repentance is more than just sorrow, but as Paul explained in **2 Corinthians 7:10**, ***“...the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*** Repentance, then, is much more than just being sorry about something, but repentance means that we will actually stop the sinful behavior. The person who repents of lying must stop lying, and the person who repents of adultery must stop committing adultery.

When I first started preaching, I remember using an illustration that I thought was rather far-out, something that would never happen, in an attempt to put this in shocking terms that all of us could understand. I used the hypothetical example of two homosexual men who would get married and would then come to us wanting to be baptized or wanting to be members of this congregation. Would we allow them to stay married to each other? In other words, would baptism sanctify or justify that marriage? At that time, it was just a bizarre illustration. Fifteen years ago, who would have ever thought that two gay men could get legally married here in the United States. But here we are. Just a few weeks ago, the Supreme Court of Iowa issued a ruling allowing gay marriage in the state of Iowa. When we got home from Minnesota last night, I went into the church office and turned on the radio. The first thing I heard was that on Monday morning, tomorrow morning—county clerks in Iowa will start issuing marriage licenses to same sex couples. Less than a hundred miles from this building, men can now marry men and women can now marry women. So we ask the question again: If two men are married to one another and want to be baptized, would that baptism wash away their sin of homosexuality? And the answer is yes. But could they continue in that relationship? If our state ever legalizes same-sex unions, I pray to God that we as a church will have the courage to require the separation of gay couples who ask to be members.

The grace of God can remove our sins, but the grace of God does not allow us to continue living in those sins. We could say the same thing about a man having an incestuous relationship with his daughter. God can forgive the sin of incest, but the sin has to stop. Simply being baptized does not sanctify that relationship and certainly does not allow it to continue.

Several years ago, I met a missionary who had spent several years preaching in the nation of Cameroon in West Africa. He told of a time when he was actually in the water with a man about to be baptized, and someone on the bank of the river called



out and said, **“Did you know that that man has three wives?”** Apparently, that is still a common practice in some parts of Cameroon, and the man about to be baptized thought that he could keep his three wives. Let me ask: What would you have done in that situation? Would baptism have sanctified his polygamist marriage? I know what I would have done: I would have walked with him out of the water, and I would have very lovingly explained what the Bible teaches about marriage and I certainly would have done a better job of teaching what the Bible says on the subject of repentance. And from that point on, if I were living in a culture where nearly everyone you meet has been personally touched by polygamy, I would probably start bringing that up in my studies with people before they obey the gospel.

The same principle applies to those who rob banks, to those who cheat on their taxes, to those who murder, to those who worship idols. Repentance comes before baptism, and repentance means that we have a change of heart about sin and that we make a decision to stop the behavior.

Many years ago, I was discussing this question with some Christians who had moved in from another state and wanted to be a part of the church down in Janesville. His first marriage had ended for a reason other than fornication, and he was now in his second marriage. We sat down and read **Matthew 19**, and before I could even say anything, he said, **“Wow! This is more than just being a part of the congregation. This is a matter of salvation.”** In other words, he got it—he came to the conclusion on his own that he was living in sin with a woman who was not really his wife. We cried together, and he and his wife wondered why no one had ever shown them this passage before. They had never even seen **Matthew 19**, even though a preacher in the Lord’s church had done the ceremony. Her father was a denominational minister. The man had grown up in the Lord’s church—right next door to one of our Christian universities down in Texas. They had two beautiful children, it was a sad situation, but unfortunately he decided to stay in that marriage—with the clear understanding that he was living his life in open rebellion to the will of God.

We understand, then, that God can forgive the sin of adultery (just as he can forgive polygamy, and homosexuality, and incest), but as with all sin, forgiveness is conditional not just on baptism but also on repentance. Repentance is more than just saying, **“I’m sorry for that ceremony,”** but repentance actually requires a change of lifestyle.

**B. There is a second objection that some people raise at this point as they say, “But there are no examples of separation in the Bible.”**

**»PPT»**

But before we even get into this one, we have to realize something: Nowhere in the Bible do we have a specific example of two gay men married to each other ever being told to break up that **“marriage.”** So just because we may not find a specific example of something does not mean that it is not required. One preacher once told me personally that Peter never addressed this issue on the Day of Pentecost, that Peter never told people living in adulterous marriages that they needed to separate.

I pointed out to him, though, that there is an interesting little gap after the people on Pentecost asked Peter what they had to do to be saved and before we find that they were actually baptized. In **verses 40-41**, the Bible says, ***“And with many other words [Peter] solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation!’ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”*** What did Peter tell these people after he told them to repent and be baptized and before they actually did it? I do not know, but I know that he used ***“many other words”*** to do it, and I know that he was speaking about relevant issues of his generation. I would suggest that we can do no less than that today.

But back to the claim that there are no examples of separation in the Bible. I would ask that we all take some time this week to re-read **Ezra 9-10**. As the people returned from the Babylonian Captivity, they realized that they had sinned against the Lord by marrying foreign women—something that was specifically forbidden under the Law of Moses. After weeping and trembling, after Ezra literally pulled the hair out of his head and beard, and after they all tore their clothing in shame, the people concluded that the only way to please God would be to separate from their foreign wives. The Scripture specifically says that there were children born into some of those sinful relationships—there were children in the solemn assembly where they made this decision—and yet the people repented of their sin by conducting an investigation and by putting an end to their sinful unions.

This, of course, is in the Old Testament, but I should also point out a very interesting but tragic situation in the New Testament, in **Mark 6**. You might remember that John the Baptist was preaching to King Herod. John was referring to Herod’s relationship with Herodias when he said in **Mark 6:18**, ***“It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”*** In other words, that marriage was not lawful according to the Law of God, because according to God’s Law, Herodias was still married to Herod’s brother. According to the law of Rome, Herod and Herodias were married. Herod was the law of Rome. In **Mark 6:17**, the Bible even says that Herod had ***“married”*** Herodias. The Bible even uses that word to refer to the unscriptural union that had taken place. We know, then, that God does not always see eye-to-eye with the government in terms of marriage and divorce. And so when John told the King that his marriage was not ***“lawful,”*** he was telling the King to repent, or to remove himself from that sinful relationship. John was not suggesting that Herod simply apologize and keep on living with his brother’s wife. And let us never forget what happened to John. The Bible says in **Mark 6:17** that John was ***“arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias.”*** Several verses later, we learn that at Herod’s birthday party, through an unfortunate series of events, Herodias requested (and received) John’s head on a platter. My understanding of this is that John was beheaded because he refused to compromise on this issue.

I have known preachers to do weddings without even getting into God’s teaching on this subject, and their attitude is, ***“Well, we will just rely on the grace of God, and we will let God sort it out in the end.”*** On the Day of Judgment, those men will owe an apology not only to God but also to John the Baptist.

- C. **Over the past few years, people have come up with another objection to what Jesus said on this issue by claiming (for various reasons) that Matthew 19:9 simply does not apply to certain groups of people.** ▶PPT▶

Some will say that the words of Jesus are actually in the Old Testament and have no application for any situation today, others will say that these words of Jesus only apply to Christians and that non-Christians are not even capable of committing adultery (that divorce is forbidden only for Christians), but the answers to these two arguments are basically the same.

Please look carefully at **verse 9** and ask the very simple question: To whom did Jesus apply this statement? Unless I missed something, Jesus was speaking to, **“whoever.”** In other words, this is a law from God that applies to Jews, it applies to Gentiles, it applies to Christians, it applies to non-Christians, it applies to **“whoever.”** If you are a **“whoever,”** then this verse applies to you. In fact, several chapters later, Jesus would tell His disciples to take this message to **“all the nations” (Matthew 28:19)**. This message on marriage *was* and *continues to be* universal in its application—just like the rest of what Jesus said in the book of **Matthew**—the Beatitudes, the Golden Rule, and so on.

It is also interesting that Jesus does not tie this or limit this to the Law of Moses. In fact, Jesus takes it all the way back to the beginning. Jesus takes His reasoning all the way back to the creation of Adam and Eve. Again, what Jesus said here continues to apply to, **“whoever.”**

- D. **Others have raised the objection, “Well, how can this be true if God wants me to be happy?”** ▶PPT▶

After all, **“Surely a loving God would not want me to stay in an unhappy marriage.”** Or, **“Surely a loving God would not want me to break up my fourth marriage and be single, would he?”** This myth is based on the false assumption that God’s main job is to keep us happy, because when we actually look in the Bible, we find that God’s main goal for us is holiness, not happiness. Since when has God ever ignored sin for the sake of our personal happiness? And if the Lord will ignore the sin of adultery for the sake of our happiness, what other sins will the Lord overlook? Will He ignore the sin of drunkenness for the alcoholic who loves his alcohol, or will He ignore the sin of the woman who gets so much pleasure out of sharing the latest bit of gossip?

Perhaps we need to turn this around a little bit and consider the great pain that divorce has brought into the world. We have been focusing this morning on those who *commit* divorce. But what about those who *suffer* divorce? What about those innocent mates whose hearts are broken, those who have been betrayed by a spouse? When a woman comes into our home and goes through half a box of Kleenex crying over an unfaithful mate, please spare me the argument that God will overlook sin for our personal happiness!



Connected to this, some will say, **“But doesn’t this make the gospel ‘bad news’ for some people?”** And there again, as one of our handouts points out, that way of thinking is rather short-sighted. The gospel may call for some very difficult decisions, but who would argue that the gospel is bad news for the thief and the liar just because they are told to stop those particular sins?

E. **Others have said, “But doesn’t Paul give another reason for divorce and remarriage over in 1 Corinthians 7?”** **»PPT»**

And the answer to that is, **“No.”** We do not have time to get too deep in it this morning. I have included some information in the handout for this morning. But the short answer is that Paul never uses the normal Greek word for **“divorce”** in **1 Corinthians 7**, but the context clearly indicates that he is speaking of something closer to our modern-day concept of a temporary separation, because he says in **1 Corinthians 7:10-11**, ***“...that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.”*** There are certainly some situations where a brief separation might be needed—maybe there is out of control gambling, or alcoholism or abuse (we are not really given much of a reason here)—but we do know that Paul *specifically prohibits remarriage*. He encourages the husband and wife to either remain celibate or to be reconciled at the appropriate time. Paul, therefore, is not contradicting Jesus by giving a second reason for divorce and remarriage, but he is simply addressing the possibility of separation.

F. **Others have raised the objection, “Well, my first marriage took place more than 20 years ago. I married that girl when I was young and stupid. We were only 18 or 19 years old at the time, and besides, I got remarried so long ago I can hardly even remember it. How could God possibly hold me accountable for that?”** **»PPT»**

Let me propose a hypothetical situation: If I leave my wife and children and marry my neighbor, according to the verse we have up here on the wall, Jesus classifies that new relationship as **“adultery.”** How long would I have to do it—how long would I have to live with that woman—for my adultery not to be a sin? Is it a sin on the very first day? How about after I have been committing adultery two weeks, two years, or maybe even for twenty years? I have tried to find it, but I cannot find a statute of limitations on sin in the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible makes several very interesting statements—applied equally to both men and women. In **Proverbs 2:16-17**, King Solomon refers to, ***“...the strange woman...the adulteress who flatters with her words; [who] leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.”*** How interesting that God specifically says that she had left the companion **“of her youth.”** For that reason, she is referred to as an **“adulteress.”** And then for the men, we come to an interesting passage in **Malachi 2:14**, where the prophet says that, ***“...the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”*** And again, the

Lord specifically points out that although the first marriage might have taken place a long time ago, ***“she is [still] your companion and your wife by covenant.”***

Unfortunately, some people have the idea that God allows **“starter marriages.”** And so almost like people will have a small **“starter home,”** God will allow us to take marriage for a test drive. But that is certainly not the case. Adultery is just as much a sin after doing it for twenty years as it is on day number one.

**G. And then finally, some have said, “But what about the children who are born into that adulterous marriage?”** »PPT»

If children have been born into that second union, mothers and fathers still have a God-given responsibility to raise those children, but the parents do not have a God-given right to continue committing the sin of adultery with one another. I would simply back it up a step. What about the millions of children from all of those first marriages? Who is speaking up for them? The terrible impact of divorce on children has been well-researched and is well-documented, and ultimately we have to believe that fewer children will suffer when we follow God’s law than when we do not.

**Conclusion:**

So far this morning, then, we have studied the one circumstance where God allows divorce and a subsequent remarriage. According to **Matthew 19:9**, the only reason is ***“sexual immorality,”*** and even then, only the innocent person has the right to enter into a new marriage relationship. We have also considered several loopholes that various people have suggested.

Have we misunderstood the seriousness of what Jesus said in **Matthew 19**? As we close, I wonder if we could look back at **Matthew 19** and consider the next three verses—**Matthew 19: 10-12**...

***<sup>10</sup> The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” <sup>11</sup> But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. <sup>12</sup> For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”***

The disciples understood exactly what Jesus had said. In fact, they saw that marriage was so serious that it might be better for some people not to get married. And when they said that, it is interesting to me that Jesus did not *argue*, but He *agreed* and pointed out that some people ought to consider being single as an option. Those who divorce for any reason other than the one given in **verse 9** would be in that third category—those who make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God. And at that point, the disciples understood the words of the prophet Malachi, ***“Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously***

***against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce,' says the Lord, the God of Israel" (Malachi 2:15-16).***

What we have read this morning should make all single people think very carefully about those they are dating. Marriage is for life, unless your spouse commits the sin of sexual immorality. Unfortunately, a lot of people do not like everything that God has said on this subject, and so we need to be especially careful when choosing a partner for life.

For those of us who are already married, all of these comments should encourage us to put in some special effort toward making our own marriages work. If we will be together until death, we might as well make it as pleasant as possible.

For those of us with loved ones whose marriages seem to be falling apart, I would suggest that we go to God in prayer on their behalf.

And for whoever may be living in adultery, for those who divorce for a reason other than sexual sin and get remarried, the Bible would encourage all people in that situation to get out of it—to make it right with God, to make it right with the church, to set the right example for your children. Living in adultery can be forgiven. Adultery can absolutely be covered by the grace of God. It is the grace of God, in fact, that brought us the passage we have considered this morning.

The Bible teaches that baptism will wash away our sins, but only to the extent that we are willing to trust in God and change our lives as we should. If you have any questions, we hope you will ask. If you need the prayers of the church, write it down and pass it forward. If you already believe in God, if you are ready to change, and if you are ready to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins, we hope you will let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [church@fourlakescoc.org](mailto:church@fourlakescoc.org)