

Welcome: "Good morning everyone..."

Let's open our Bibles to **Matthew Chapter 19**

The title of this sermon is: **Jesus on Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, Singleness & Kid's (Part 1) | Matthew 19:1-15**

This will be a **2-part series** due to the enormity of the text and the topics before us... as you can see from the Title of the sermon alone.

So, for our time today we will focus on what Jesus taught on **Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage (Part 1)**... and next Sunday we will focus on **Singleness & Kids (Part 2)**

I'll be honest... **Part 1** of the series is a pretty heavy & sobering text in light of the topic today being; **Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage**.

So, due to the **subject matter** of our text... let me say just a few things up front before we dive into our text this morning... **a sermon disclaimer of sorts**.

First, we can't possibly cover everything to be said on the topic of **divorce** and **re-marriage**... those are pretty **big issues** within the church; so you'll have to look for further resources... we have a couple recommendations:

We put together a small paper... that is sort of a "**Position Paper**" on some of these things that helps us navigate them as a church; those are available to you today at the **connect desk**. If you have further questions they will answer some questions that I don't necessarily answer in the sermon today.

Secondly, there are many great books on the topic... a really great recommendation on the topic is:

Book Recommendation: **Marriage, Divorce And Re-Marriage In The Bible** by Jay Adams

It's less than 100 pages... it's very succinct... but very helpful. Sometimes these issues around **divorce** and **re-marriage** within Christian community get rather complex and this helps sort through allot of those issues in a very faithful and biblical way. So, if you have further questions we have these available at our **resource table** today... or you can find it on Amazon.

Lastly, for those of you who have experienced the pain of divorce... please know; if you in anyway feel **signaled out** today... that is not God's goal... that is not my goal. All of us together as a people, as a community and as a church... are touched by this brokenness.

O.K. lets get to our text... we will be looking at **versus 1-15** of **Matthew Chapter 19**. Just so you know, I will be reading the whole text (verses 1-15) for the sake of context... but unpacking **verses 1-10** today only for **part 1** of this series.

Lets **start** reading now... **Matthew 19** starting in **verse 1**;

Matthew 19:1-15 (NIV);

When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³ Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

⁷ "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

¹⁰ The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

¹¹ Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

¹³ Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

¹⁴ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." ¹⁵ When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

***Pray:** "This is God's holy word... let's pray."

Well... like I said, this is a heavy and sobering text this morning - **obviously**. As we just read the **subject matter** in our text before us; I know it makes most wince, and perhaps uncomfortable a little bit... maybe some more than others.

Q. Why? Because **none** of us... **none** of us live lives that are **untouched** by broken relationships, by messy relationships... by the difficulty of family.

It's clear in scripture that God has ideals for marriage and for family, etc... It's clear from our lives that **none** of us have experienced God's **perfect intent** and ideal for relationships.

We all... in one way or another are touched by **brokenness** that comes into our lives through **family relationships** and **broken sexuality**, etc... etc... All of us then, are in need of God's grace and God's healing. We are also in need of... God's truth and understanding. So... **Grace & Truth has come to us... in and through God's word this morning.**

And it's really made evident in the first **2 verses**... It may seem merely like it's just a transition; but the first **2 verses** are really, really, important in the details. The first **2 verses** frame this whole thing.

Let's read **versus 1-2** again... "When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there."

So, one of the things that is really important... is Jesus is leaving Galilee where he lived out most of His life... where He has lived out almost the entirety of His ministry up to until this point... and now he is heading south through Judea to Jerusalem.

Q. Why is He going to Jerusalem? What lay's before Him? The Cross

Jesus now is on the **final leg** of the long journey of **God's love incarnate**, in the person of Christ... as He is heading toward the cross. Jesus has been preparing

His disciples for this journey and for this moment. Remember He said 2 chapters ago in **Mathew 16:21** (NIV); ²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

And He mentioned it again in **Chapter 17**... and here now we have that moment where Jesus is headed, resolutely toward the cross. **And here's why that's important**... Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for our sins, our brokenness, our messes... because He loves us. And He **loves us** in spite of our sins, and our brokenness, and the messiness... and the way we are all touched by it.

And so all the messiness that is represented in this text is **framed** in this idea that Jesus teaches these things about **marriage** and **divorce** and **re-marriage**... **while He is on His way to the cross.** He is not doing it as some professor in an ivory tower; He is not doing it as some cold counselor... He is doing it with the joy that is set before Him. (Hebrews 12:2)

Matthew also tells us there in **verse 2** that great crowds **followed** Jesus. When Matthew said, **"Followed"**... he doesn't just mean that they were just present, but they were **following** Jesus. Just like we are endeavoring to **follow** Jesus. That means that these things about **marriage**, **divorce**, and **re-marriage**... these things are couched within the idea of being **"Jesus followers"**.

And so in that idea... of **following** Jesus, and the love of the cross, and His healing work, and the newness of His kingdom... within that framework, Jesus begins to talk about **marriage**, and **divorce** and **re-marriage**.

So, in **verse 3** it says; "Some Pharisees came to him to **test** him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

Now notice here that the Pharisees are not coming seeking genuine information; it says they came to **test** Him. And they are trying to see what His position will be. They are bringing up a **hot topic** of the day. This was like a **hotly charged issue** in the First Century in Israel.

And part of the **Pharisees** goal here is sort of like **"political"**. No matter which way Jesus goes here, (what position he takes) in answering this question... He is going to offend some of the population. They are **setting Jesus up** with the **goal to turn people against Jesus**. Culture was so **sharply divided** on this issue... that no matter how Jesus answered... He will upset and alienate a lot of people.

There were **2 camps** during the time. There was the **majority** view and the **minority** view. And the way some of these views were sort of expressed or played-out in the life of Israel was in the context of **rabbinical debates**.

I'm going to mention a couple Rabbis' names... **Rabbi Hillel** and **Rabbi Shammai**. And I will also mention **Rabbi Akiba**... they will represent the different views... which I will talk more about in a moment.

Like I mentioned, there were **2 views** during the time that the **Rabbis** were debating... and they were around a **single** verse from the Old Testament in the book of **Deuteronomy Chapter 24:1** (NASB); **"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house...**

The debate was centered on those **2 phrases**: 1. **"that she finds no favor in his eyes** and 2. **has found some indecency in her?"**

So that was the debate for a long, long time in Israel around the issue of divorce... **What did Moses mean there???** ... is what they debated.

Now... there was the **majority** view and the **minority** view. The **majority** view was represented by the **Rabbinical School of Hillel**... Hillel was the one who headed up this school of thought.

And it had interpreted that **verse** to mean... that you could **divorce** your wife (your spouse) for **any reason**. And they literally said in their writing's (in the **Talmud**); you could **divorce** your wife because she burnt a meal, Or she had a bad hairstyle, Or talking to other men on the street, OR... because she spoke disrespectfully about the In-Laws (let's let that one sit for a moment).

That was the **majority** view; that you could **divorce** your wife for any reason. They would say that's what **Moses** was getting at. Later on **Rabbi Akiba** came along and he said this; **"she finds no favor in his eyes"** includes the idea that **"if you found a woman more beautiful"** you can **divorce** your wife and marry her.

That was the **majority** view in Israel during the time. The other view was the **minority** view represented by **Rabbi Shammai**... or the **Rabbinical School of Shammai**. And it said this; **"You could not divorce your wife for such reasons, but you should divorce your wife in the case of adultery."** To find some **indecency** in her... was to find that she had been **unfaithful**.

And so the **Pharisees** present Jesus with the **majority** view. Notice the one that they are laying before him... "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "This is what most people are saying Jesus; do you say it?" Again, they wanted to **TEST** him.

This was a **big question then**... this is a **big question now**. Jesus say's in...

Matthew 19:4 (NIV); "**Haven't you read,**" he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Lets break-down Jesus response for a little bit. First of all, He starts off by saying to the Pharisees "**Haven't you read,**" which was such a nice little insult from Jesus... He knows they are trying to **set Him up**... and He knows what this match is all about... and so He gives them a little jab there by saying, "**Haven't you read,**"

But more than that... what Jesus is doing there is appealing to the **ultimate authority** on such issues. He did **not** say. "Well Rabbi Shammai... Or, well where Rabbi Hillel errors... Well this other Rabbi... Or, my opinion..." Jesus say's; "**Haven't you read,**" In other words, when thinking about these issues haven't you appealed to the **ultimate authority**... which is **God's word**. That's what Jesus is doing here.

He is saying... "If we have questions about these things... the place that we ought to go, the full and final authority, the only opinion that matters... is found in the word of God."

That was meant to **confront** their thought processes and was meant to **confront** the popular culture of the day... and it's meant to frame and inform and conform our thinking as God's people. The **word of God... the Bible** is the final authority on issues such as these... **on all issues.**

And it's interesting where Jesus goes... He goes right back to the very beginning... and He references **Genesis Chapter 1** and **Genesis Chapter 2**. Not only is He saying that **the bible** is the full and final **authority** on these matters... He is also saying that these things are rooted in **creation** and **God's intent**. Therefore, it is not a matter of a **trajectory of culture**, it is not something that is outdated, or traditional, or needs to progress and become modern... Jesus say's it's **not** an issue of finding the modern progressive perspective... or the old

traditional perspective... it is a matter of **scripture** which represents **God's** **creational intent for humanity**.

So Jesus says; **"Haven't you read,"** and then He quotes from **Genesis 1:27** and **Genesis 2:24**... First, **Genesis 1:27** (NASB); **"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."**

And then in **Genesis 2:24** it say's speaking about marriage... **Genesis 2:24** (NASB); **"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."**

Both passages, but the **second verse** in particular (**Genesis 2:24**), is **paramount in the biblical understanding of marriage**. Both **Jesus** and **Paul** reference it when answering questions about **marriage**.

Notice, what Jesus does here when He pushes us back to the **Book of Genesis**. The **first** thing that He brings out, in His mind... **is marriage is between a man and a woman... that's the biblical view**.

The **second** thing that Jesus say's and points us to... is this idea, that a **man is joined to his wife**... that they become **ONE** flesh. Jesus used the word **"united"** here in **Matthew**... it say's **"joined"** in the (NASB); other translations say **"cleave"**... the Hebrew word means **"be cemented together"**.

And then Jesus **adds** commentary to that and says, **"Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."** Or **tear apart**.

That's huge. Do you feel the weight of that? When a couple speaks their vows and consummates their vows with sexual union, it is not man, woman, pastor, parent, who is the main actor — **God is**. God **joins** a husband and a wife in **one flesh** - they are no longer two but **ONE**... that there is permanence to it **"cemented together"** and that it's a work that God does between two people.

Therefore, it is a **covenant relationship**. A contract may exist between two people, but a covenant is between the **bride** the **groom** and **God**. And Jesus say's; **"What God has joined together, let no one separate."** Or **tear apart**. That's the **biblical view** of marriage. A **covenant relationship** *that can't be broken*.

And So Jesus response to the question in essence is **"No"**. Marriage is meant to be **permanent**. **"No divorce"** is His first answer. The summation of his first answer was **"What God has joined together, let no one separate."**

But... the **Pharisees** are unsatisfied so they **drill down** and say in...

Matthew 19:7-9 (NIV); "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives **because your hearts were hard**. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

So the **Pharisees** go back to the text that has been debated amongst them in **Deuteronomy 24**... and they ask, saying... "You say **No divorce**, then why did Moses command that you could be divorced?" And Jesus corrects them... **notice the language**... they say, "**Why did Moses command?**" that's their interpretation of this passage... and Jesus say's... "Wait a minute you have already misinterpreted it."

"Moses didn't **command** divorce... Moses was **permitting** divorce..." and then He takes them right back to **Genesis** and says; **But it was not this way from the beginning**. In other words, that's not the idea of creation and that's not the intent of God... Jesus keeps pushing them back to the **word of God** and back to **Genesis** – letting scripture interpret scripture.

And then He tells them the reason why Moses permitted **divorce** in the law... "**Because of the hardness of our hearts.**" It wasn't that God **instituted marriage** in **Genesis 2** and then **instituted divorce** in **Deuteronomy 24**. God never instituted divorce... **He only instituted marriage**.

But, humanity began to practice **divorce**. So when the **Law** was given... God through **Moses** was putting some parameters around the practice... **Moses** gave the **Law** to regulate the common practice, **not approve of**... a merciful thing to do.

God in His mercy was also putting some protection around the woman who had very few rights of any during that time. When a woman was **sent away in divorce**; she had no **recourse** for income, or protection or anything... so a **certificate of divorce** afforded her some cultural, legal, and societal **recourse** for protection and provision.

So that's what **God's Law** is doing there... putting some parameters and protection around what people were doing because their **hearts were hard**, and they weren't recognizing the **original intent** of what God had said and meant in the **Book of Genesis**.

So this passage (**Deuteronomy 24**) is a **concession** not a **command**. Jesus said in **verse 7** Moses permitted because of the **hardness of your hearts**. And then Jesus goes on to give the **correct interpretation** of the passage that was debated by the rabbinical schools in the next verse... in **verse 9** He clarifies it for us; **"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."**

So Jesus here provides an **exception** to what he previously said in answering the question... His first answer was; **"What God has joined together, let no one separate."** **No divorce.**

And then he reasserts it with a **singular exception**; **"except in the case of sexual immorality"**. So we of course want to define **sexual immorality**... **and we would like to define it broadly**. And to be honest the word in Greek can be defined broadly.

The Greek word is **"Pornia"** which means all kinds of **sexual immorality** and sexual acts. But most scholars would agree what it means in this context is **adultery**. That Jesus is saying... **"Except in the case of adultery"** you shouldn't get divorced. Jesus provides an **exception** there... and it's the only exception Jesus ever provides us with.

The Apostle Paul gave us one more **exception** when addressing these issues in **1 Corinthians Chapter 7**; where he talks about if a **non-believing spouse** wants to leave a **believing spouse** and refuses to stay... then that person is free from that covenant. **1 Corinthians Ch. 7:14 (NLT)**; **"But if the husband or wife who isn't a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the believing husband or wife is no longer bound to the other, for God has called you to live in peace."**

So those are the only **2 exceptions** given to us in scripture. Jesus says **No to divorce**... it's not an option, that's not God's intent, that's not God's creational intent... but here are...

2 exceptions:

1. Adultery
2. An unbelieving spouse who will not stay (*abandonment*)

What this means and what they had to hear for the **majority view** in Israel... and what we need to hear for our view in culture today... is Jesus and scripture **rejects** the vast majority of reasons for **divorce** today... incompatibility, irreconcilable differences, financial problems, life trauma, "falling out of love," etc, etc ... none of those are allowed in scripture as reasons for divorce.

Now, what about abuse? What if a spouse is in danger? If you are in a **physically abusive** relationship, Jesus **wouldn't** want you to remain in a place of danger. Jesus is **committed** to the protection of the innocent. But Jesus is also **committed** to the repentance and healing of the sinner. And **ultimately** he is **committed** to the reconciliation of even the most distressed relationships.

So I wouldn't, and I don't think Jesus would counsel you to just "suck it up and deal with it" – one of you may need to move out for a while. But I can't biblically say that you automatically have a pass to get **divorced** because of it. Again, **ultimately** God desires repentance and reconciliation. I know it may seem impossible... **But God is in the business of doing impossible things.**

So, divorce is **permissible**... only in the case of **adultery** on the part of one of the spouses... Or, **abandonment** by an unbelieving spouse.

It gets a little tougher... very importantly what Jesus doesn't do here is just wholesale, out-right side with the **minority** view. The **minority** view was of **Deuteronomy 24:1**, which was... you should get divorced in the case of adultery... that was the **Rabbinical School of Shammai**.

It seems as if Jesus is agreeing with the **minority** view... **But He's not**. Where as they required divorce for adultery... notice the language there... Jesus only **allows** it for **adultery**. It's a **concession** not a **command**. Jesus didn't say if your spouse commits adultery you need to, you must, you ought to get a divorce. You **"may"**... it's a **concession** not a **command**.

Q. Why is that important? Because Jesus is doing what Jesus always does... He's leaving the **door open** for forgiveness, and reconciliation, and the power of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of God. He leaves the **door open** for marriages to be saved and salvaged even in the **worst of betrayals**... and the **deepest of pain**... and the most **horrific of things**.

Jesus stands as the one who always has **hope** in the power of His own cross and the working of the Spirit and the power of forgiveness and reconciliation and restoration... remember all of this was framed in the cross and the kingdom and the healing that comes in the kingdom.

Remember **Dom's** message last Sunday on **forgiveness**... specifically forgiving those who have sinned against us. **Forgiving, because we have been forgiven.**

And Jesus is also teaching us that there is a new kingdom, and there is a new power, and there is new hope. **He leaves the door open for that.**

Jesus always **calls us** to walk through the door of forgiveness and reconciliation wherever possible. Therefore in His love... He doesn't say that **adultery** automatically means **divorce**... but in His compassion there is that **concession**; knowing the pain that it entails.

But the **goal** in God's mind is always forgiveness and reconciliation where possible.

So, then we want to ask the question... **What about when reconciliation doesn't happen after divorce?**

Then we ought to ask the question... **Can a Christian get remarried then?** Let me say first that this can become complicated, that this is debated, and that this is sensitive. I know this represents many of us in this room. So, what about remarriage? **Can a Christian be remarried after divorce?**

The answer is **"Yes"** in the right circumstances. The **exception clause** given by Jesus **"Only in the case of sexual immorality"** applies to both divorce and remarriage.

It is the validity of the divorce biblically, that establishes eligibility for remarriage biblically. The **key** principle is... **"If divorce occurs on biblical ground then the innocent party is free to remarry."**

If the **divorce** happens on biblical ground... abandonment by an unbeliever, Or, adultery... **then the innocent party is free to remarry**.

So, everyone in their minds right now is saying... **then what about the guilty party?** Jesus doesn't address that in this passage... there is perhaps some ambiguity here. Paul does give us a little bit of a **parallel idea** in **1 Corinthians 7:10-11** again when he's talking about some of these things that say's **1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (NLT); But for those who are married, I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. ¹¹ But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to him. And the husband must not leave his wife.**

So, Paul would say; "if someone chooses to leave in this scenario and therefore becomes the **guilty party** there are **2 options** here."

2 options:

1. To be reconciled in that marriage
2. To remain single

At that point the **guilty party** would **remain single**... Or, **be reconciled**.

Jesus say's...

1. Marriage is permanent
2. Divorce is not the plan
3. There are 2 exceptions
4. But reconciliation is always the hope
5. And there is the hope for remarriage in those instances

Now I realize as we all do... *This is a very high standard*. It's a **high view of marriage**, and it's a **high view of scripture**. It's so high in fact that even the disciples who had been with Jesus for a long time were kind of "trippin" on it. Look what they say in **verse 10** of our text this morning; The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

And Jesus say's in **verse 11**; "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given."

What Jesus **isn't** saying there is... "Well you pick or choose if you want to believe (the word of God / the bible)" *It's not what He is saying*. Jesus is saying; "Marriage is a gift and it actually is a really high calling, and it is kind of a big deal, and it is meant to be permanent, and that will be a great challenge; so, not everyone should get married."

This is what Jesus is saying here in **verse 11**. I know this grates against our **popular Christian culture** because we have held marriage up to be the ultimate Christian experience... **and it's not**. *Which Jesus will address later in this text as it relates to singleness*.

The disciples are saying... "Woa... This is too high of a view" and Jesus is saying; "Yea, some of you can't handle it, so you shouldn't get married."

So, how should we handle that? First of all, I just want to say again, "I know this is a sobering and even uncomfortable text and I can only imagine there are those in this room who are feeling really uncomfortable."

I know for some of you this *hits very close to home*, but I must say again... all of us have been affected in some way. None of us live in the **perfect ideal** of what God intended for a family. **All of us experience brokenness**... *we are all in this boat together in one way or another*.

With that said... and knowing this text was **framed in the love of God on the cross**... were Jesus *paid the price for every sin*...

Some of you as Christians have had **unbiblical divorces** and **unbiblical re-marriages**. *So, you're asking the good question..."According to the bible I have sinned... What do I do about that?"*

3 points:

1. Neither of those is the unforgivable sin (**God's grace is abundant**) We the church (capital C church) have offended... and in some way have made divorced, and re-married people feel like second-class citizens in the church; **and that is wrong**. And there is no way whether divorced or re-marriage makes you a second-class citizen.

Let... *"He who is without sin, throw the first stone."* *Neither of those is unforgivable*. Remember it's **framed in the cross**... If you have had an unbiblical divorce, or an unbiblical remarriage, you go to Jesus acknowledge His truth, repent, and you ask for His grace and forgiveness... **and you have it**. As is say's **1st John 1:9**...

Now **repentance** gets a little tricky with that issue, because we might think... *"Well I have had an unbiblical divorce and so then I had an unbiblical remarriage... so now then should I break up my current marriage to be reconciled to the first person that I was married too?"* The answer is **"No"**. That's point number **"two"**.

2. Don't try and reverse it (**Two wrongs won't make a right**) That's not the way that it works here...

So, the third point helps us then....

3. Recognize and commit to living out God's plan for marriage (**New start**) What it looks like for marriage now... A new start. That's what we all get in Jesus. We all get a new start. **That's what the cross is all about!!!**

None of us should forget this: Remember **verse 1** of our text told us that Jesus taught these things **on the way to the cross...** that frames our perception of this.

Don't underestimate the power of the cross. Don't underestimate the power of God's spirit... and what forgiveness and reconciliation can do.

So... **go to Jesus**... go **the cross** for forgiveness, and go there for a healing. Recognize and rejoice in God's truth... realize that we have all lived in

desistance with **God's truth** in many ways... and as a **follower of Jesus** with the help of the Holy Spirit **endeavor** to live in harmony with **God's truth** as you go forward.

I think we must also say then in **light of the cross** and this idea of forgiveness and reconciliation... that we shouldn't then give up on our marriages. Marriage is meant to be **ultimately** a picture of the relationship of Christ and the church – **Christ is the groom** and the **church is the bride** as it says in **Ephesians 5:31-32**.

Jesus never gives up on the church (I know we are not Jesus... we are imperfect)... But, the work of the cross, and forgiveness and reconciliation with the help of the Holy Spirit and the truth of God's Holy word, **we can fight for our marriages**... maybe harder than we think we can, or harder than we have been willing to.

Fighting for our marriages for some of us, **ultimately** means **surrender** **"Not my will but your will be done"** in the same way Jesus surrendered His will to the father before going to the cross... we need to surrender our wills to Jesus!!!

And I would also then just remind us in light of the fact that this is all **framed in the cross**... that **the cross** is also the greatest picture of self-sacrificial love. **Self-sacrificial love is a beautiful picture of true surrender**.

Jesus here I think is telling us in the **shadow of the cross** that this is going to require **self-sacrificial love**... and Jesus's work of the cross is a picture of that.

I think the problem with allot of our perspectives today (as it was in the culture then), is we are not working at it from **self-sacrificial love**... were working at it from **self-fulfillment** and our **needs**. And if that's the goal in marriage that's going to be a difficult road.

Let me remind those of us who are married... we must remember that good marriages are **not** marriages that are without problems (there are none of those)...

Good marriages are not problem free, rather they are grace dependent

There are marriages that are **dependent upon** the grace that God provides in the covenant that He has made. There are marriages that are **constantly renewed in God's grace**... **and we all need God's grace**.

Lastly, I will just say to our Christian community (with a capital C), that I think when it comes to the bible and marriage our view has been to low.

Our view of both scripture and marriage has been to low

Marriage is meant to be a sacred, God-formed, God glorifying, joining of a man and a woman for life.

If we can do anything at this point... we can **re-assert** and **re-capture** the ultimate authority of the Word of God... and the holiness, and the sanctity, and the beauty, and the covenant of marriage... **As God's people lets re-commit ourselves to those things for His glory and our joy!!!**

***Close in Prayer...**

So, if in any way this touches you today, respond and come to **the cross of Christ** were we **discover** God's grace, forgiveness and healing.

We can do that in a very expressive way by sharing in **the Lords supper** today.

If you need **prayer** today the **prayer team** will be up here on my right and my left. If your marriage is on the edge and maybe your **considering divorce...** please **humble** yourself and **come get prayer.**

Maybe you're having a hard time in your marriage, **due to the hardness of your heart... Come get prayer...** lets respond now to the love and grace of God and do these things.