

# Jesus and Marriage

## GOD'S WORD AND SEX:

Matthew 19:3-12

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**Bethany Church**

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Sex is not a dirty word. It is not X-rated, R-rated, PG-13 or even PG. It is G for General Audiences. It is G for God-given, G for God-created and G for God-endowed to every human being. Every human being is born sexual: male or female. Men have XY chromosomes and women have XX chromosomes. We were made one sex or another. There are all kinds of biological, emotional and relational implications rooted in our sex. (Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world and a small group of males were born with an extra chromosome. Their XXY chromosomes create difficult physiological, emotional and relational struggles.)

Although movies, music, and sitcoms thrive focusing on sexuality, Christian preachers find it a minefield. Step wrongly and boom, lots of pain. How many sermons have you heard on sex? Although preachers may avoid the subject, Jesus didn't. I think he cared too much to be silent. As I begin this series on *God's Word and Sex*, I feel like a Kentucky preacher talking about tobacco. I sense a great deal of risk. My hope is that, as we explore God's word on marriage, courtship, homosexuality and divorce, you will be enlightened, encouraged and empowered. I want us all to avoid painful traps. I want us all to experience healing, and I want to equip us all to help others.

There is a great deal of pain and confusion about sex. That's not blessing. That's why we begin by discussing judgment. God offers us several signs of his judgment, so that we may

know when we are experiencing his anger. He wants us to repent and experience his forgiveness and favor. God reveals this through St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. Paul writes:

***The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*** (Romans 1:18, NIV)

God's anger is being ***revealed***, and the first sign of it is sexual impurity. As Paul discusses the *revealed* anger of God, he outlines three broad judgments that happen successively, sequentially. Here is the first judgment:

***Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.*** (Romans 1:24, NIV)

The language is plural in this description of judgment: "God gave *them* over." Paul writes about God's judgment on the nations. Paul later turns his attention to the Jewish people. God sees us and deals with us not merely as individuals, but as families and nations. A second feature of the judgment is revealed in the words: "gave them over." The sense is that we are handed over to another authority that rules us. The language is similar to that used in the Old Testament when God in judgment handed Israel over to its enemies. King David had a choice of judgment on one occasion and asked that he not be handed over to his enemies. He believed that direct judgment from God would include mercy, and he was right. The enemy, to which nations are handed over, is identified in Romans as impurity. The term impurity means that what was genuine is now tainted. As a result, it may not taste the same. Even if it does, it doesn't produce the same effect. Sexual purity produces honor and health in a relationship. It affirms and strengthens a couple's relationship. Impurity, however, rules and plunders by causing our relationships with one another to degrade or dishonor our bodies. What does that mean?

Paul writes the Corinthians:

***Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple?*** (1 Corinthians 6:18-19, NIV)

Sexual sin is particularly serious because it defiles our bodies. Our bodies are hosts for our souls. Our bodies also, through faith in Jesus, become hosts or homes for the Holy Spirit. They become temples. However, through sexual sin they become temples or domains for other spirits. It's like this. Deface some real estate and who moves in? Thieves, vandals, drug pushers, gangs, murderers and other unseemly types occupy the area. A key to urban renewal is cleaning up and restoring property. You have to get rid of the graffiti, board up or fix the windows. You have to mow the lawn and paint. Otherwise deterioration occurs rapidly. In the same way, sexual sin makes us hosts not for the Holy Spirit, but for that which is unsavory, destructive, and even addictive. We become hosts for the enemies of our souls and relationships.

I mentioned in a sermon this past spring that I looked at a 60 year study of divorce and found that divorce rates were constant until the mid 1960s. At the same exact time sociologists observed a phenomenon they call the sexual revolution, divorce rates launched into the stratosphere. They have only ebbed slightly as more couples have chosen cohabitation rather than marriage. Despite the rising age of people getting married, all the information offered on marriage and the 5 ½ million people who live together so that their breakup can't be recorded as a divorce, our government, both in Olmsted County and nationwide, still issues one divorce decree for every two marriage certificates. With this in mind, let us consider Jesus' words on marriage when he responded to a question about divorce.

The question was: "Is it scriptural for a man to divorce his wife whatever the reason?"

Jesus responded:

***Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," 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”? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.***  
(Matthew 19:4-6, NIV)

Quoting Scripture, Jesus declared that marriage is not a human idea. God made us male and female, not to be a diverse community, not to be a polygamous family, but so the two, male and female, be united as one. The hunger to be intimate is holy. It is divinely given. We were created male and female to fit together, live together and reproduce together: one man and one woman in unity. That is God’s design. It is to be life-giving, love-revealing and humanity-developing. God has designed us to be born and developed in that kind of relationship.

Jesus wants us to know that God is not tearing us apart. God is not creating the hurt in our marriages. God is not spoiling that environment. God designed marriage for blessing. Jesus goes even further. He identifies marriage, this one flesh union between a man and woman, as a work of God. He calls it “what God has joined together.” God enjoys marriage. It is not only his gift and blessing to us. It is also his work, his accomplishment.

However, in America, people are not just concerned about getting married. They are also concerned about what will happen once they get married. Is genuine love bringing them together? Will it last? Will they experience fulfillment, joy and enduring meaning?

The conventional thought is that marital love must be chemistry. People note some of the mystery in our attraction to one another and figure that love must have some mysterious chemistry to it. There are datelines and matching services packaging chemistry kits. E-harmony.com hawks 29 dimensions of compatibility. Love is chemistry.

Truthfully, we Americans have more counseling, books and resources on marriage that teach wonderful principles of relationships. Unfortunately, the counselors, authors and even clergy are getting divorced themselves. The problem is not the principles. They are terrific. The

problem is our hearts. We don't have the hearts to consistently implement the principles. We need the principles of love written in our hearts rather than in our books.

Did you know that the author of marriage is also the author of love? "*God is love,*" the Bible affirms (1 John 4:8, 16). However, we don't love by imitating him. Instead, we love by receiving it from him and then sharing it. Listen to this testimony in Scripture:

***We love because he first loved us.*** (1 John 4:19, NIV)

We don't love because we believe that God loved us. We don't love because we are commanded to love. People try to love and see it fail because it's impure. It's mixed with bad stuff. Instead, we love because we first experience God's own love. That patient, holy love awakens and renews us. As that happens, written principles become heart passions. "*By this,*" said Jesus, "*all people will know you are my disciples, if you love one another*" (John 13:35). The standard of that love is Christ's love for us. Christ makes it possible for us to love our mate as he loves us. That's genuine love.

Are we appropriate hosts for that kind of love, or do our sins bring God's judgment rather than presence? Do they leave us slaves to other passions? Most of the Bible is not about relationship principles. Why would it be if we can't consistently implement them? Most the Bible is about redemption. It is about atonement and how it releases us from judgment, redeems us from slavery, prepares the way for God's presence and restores his blessing. As much as we need to know and implement relationship principles (and we do need to know them), we need the redemption of Christ so that we have the heart to love and build healthy relationships. That is God's will. We need to become hosts for the presence of God. Our bodies need to be cleansed temples for the Holy Spirit. Let's begin then with the first step. Repentance! (We'll use the sermon insert as a guide for repentance). Let's repent and embrace the purifying work of Christ.