

Main Idea: In Mark 10:1-12 we learn about Jesus from a question about divorce.

- I. Jesus receives a controversial question (1-2).
 - A. Keep in mind the context.
 1. Jesus is helping people.
 2. The Pharisees are trying to trick Jesus.
 - B. Keep in mind this isn't the only passage on the subject.
- II. Jesus gives a concrete answer (3-9).
 - A. Go to the Scriptures (3-4).
 1. The Lord used the Bible to deal with problems.
 2. The Pharisees used the Bible to cause problems.
 - B. Go back to the beginning (5-9).
 1. God created us (6).
 2. God created marriage (7).
 3. When two people marry they become one (8).
 4. When two people marry, it's supposed to be permanent (9).
 5. Divorce exists because people have a heart problem (5).
- III. Jesus identifies the critical implications (10-12).
 - A. He emphasized the seriousness of divorce.
 - B. He emphasized the value of women.
 - C. He emphasized the need for the cross.
 1. God hates adultery, as He does all sin.
 2. God loves sinners and sent His Son to rescue them.

Make It Personal: Do I believe in the Jesus that I see in Mark 10?

In His kindness God has given us four gospel accounts, and they each reveal Jesus to us, doing so in several ways. We see Jesus doing many good deeds, and this teaches us much about Jesus. We see Him doing miracles, and this teaches us about Jesus. We see Him teaching, and staying up all night in prayer, and ultimately dying on a cross, and leaving His tomb alive. It all teaches us about Jesus, who is He, and why He came, and why we need Him.

But this morning we come to a passage that's rather unpleasant, even controversial. It was for Jesus, and will be for us. But it too teaches us about Jesus, and why we need Him. In today's text we're going to learn about Jesus from a question about divorce.

Scripture Reading: Mark 10:1-12

“I've got a right to be happy.” Those words might best sum up the spirit of the age in which we live. This is generation of self-fulfillment. Talk about duty and loyalty and commitment, and you'll likely see cavernous yawns if not disdainful stares. “I'll be committed, as long as I get something out of it. I'll be loyal to you, as long as it adds to my sense of self-worth.” And so on.

What happens when two people who are living for self-fulfillment *get married*? It's a time-bomb just waiting to explode. And the explosions can be heard all around us. The feelings of infatuation fade in time, as feelings often do. Then what?

Some say then it's time to cut your losses and move on. John Adam and Nancy Williamson write in the book *Divorce: How and When to Let Go*:

“Your marriage can wear out. People change their values and lifestyles...Change is a part of life. Change and personal growth are traits for you to be proud of, indicative of a vital searching mind. You must accept the reality that in today's

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

multifaceted world it is especially easy for two persons to grow apart. Letting go of your marriage—if it is no longer fulfilling—can be the most successful thing you have ever done. Getting a divorce can be a positive, problem-solving, growth-oriented step. It can be a personal triumph.”²

We’re going to address a very delicate subject today, one that may be painful to consider, the subject of *divorce*. For many of us, this is not abstract, but personal. Last week I looked through our church directory, and counted the number of people who have personally experienced the pain of divorce. The number was 25. And we’re not a large church.

Opinions abound when divorce is discussed, so I’d like to narrow the scope. We’re not going to discuss what I think or what you think or what other people think. We’re going to consider what the Lord Jesus Himself had to say about divorce. We’re also going to learn from Mark 10:1-12 that the question of divorce gives us the opportunity to learn some amazing, hope-giving things about Jesus.

As we walk through today’s text, we’ll see three points. Here’s the first.

I. Jesus received a question about divorce (1-2).

Verses 1-2 (ESV) “And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.² And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’”

There are two things we need to keep in mind at the outset.

A. Keep in mind the context. Mark says that Jesus “left that place,” referring to Capernaum in Galilee (9:33). He headed to Judea. That’s south. That’s also where Jerusalem is.

Mark is introducing a new section in his portrait of Jesus. The Lord has been ministering for over two years primarily up north in Galilee. Now He’s heading south, heading to Jerusalem, heading to *the cross*.

Mark is going to devote chapter 10 to Jesus’ ministry in Judea and Perea. Then he focuses on Jesus’ passion week in chapters 11-16. That’s key. He devotes six chapters to tell us about Jesus’ final week. Yes, ten chapters to get to that week, and then six chapters to detail what happened in His final week.

Let this sink in. We need to grasp the significance of Jesus’ final week. It’s why He came. Many people know Jesus as a great teacher and miracle worker, which He was. But that’s not why He came, merely to model a good life for us. He came to *give* His life, and to give it in a very specific, unjust, bloody way.

We need to keep this in mind as we study Jesus’ teaching about divorce in chapter 10. Jesus will have some very convicting things to say in chapter 10. But what He did in the chapters to come, in that final week, says there’s tremendous hope for people who have fallen short of the standard He lays out in chapter ten. This is good news for those whose marriages are in trouble, or have already failed, as well as for all others who struggle with the weight of sin.

There’s a contrast in verses 1-2, and we must see it. On the one hand...

1. *Jesus is helping people.* He’s teaching them, just like He did wherever He went. At times He healed, but teaching was His emphasis. By teaching, He’s helping people. In contrast...

² Quoted taken from K. Hughes, p. 43. I’m indebted to Kent Hughes for several reflections in this introduction.

2. *The Pharisees are trying to trick Jesus.* Back in 3:6 the Pharisees made their deadly decision about Jesus. They concluded that He *must go*. And since that time, they've been on the hunt looking for a basis to get rid of Him.

Their question is a test. It's a clever question. Note the location again, in the region of Judea. Jesus is in the territory of Herod Antipas. Antipas is the wicked king who put John the Baptist to death. Remember why? John had denounced Antipas for his adulterous relationship with his brother's wife. He "put away" his wife and married his brother Philip's wife.

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" they asked. If Jesus said "no," He could be in trouble with Herod, not to mention be in conflict with Old Testament teaching. If He said "yes," they could accuse Him of being soft on sin and lax with God's Law.

There were two common views on divorce in Jesus' day, and the difference had to do with how one interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Deuteronomy 24:1 begins this way in the NIV. "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house..."

The question pertains to what Moses meant by those words, "something indecent" (or, 'some uncleanness'; ESV "some indecency"). Rabbi Hillel took a very liberal approach and said a man could divorce his wife for just about any reason, including burning his food. Rabbi Shammai and his followers, however, were more strict, teaching that the words "something indecent" referred only to premarital sin. In other words, if a newly married husband discovered his wife was not a virgin, he could then put her away.

Please also realize this. Under the Law of Moses, adultery was not grounds for divorce. Adultery was grounds for death. The adulterer and adulteress were to be stoned to death (Deut 22:22). J. Vernon McGee observes, "Now today we don't stone them to death. If we did there would be so many rock piles we wouldn't be able to get around them."³

So this is the question. "What do you think, Jesus? Is divorce lawful?"

Please don't miss the source of this question. It's coming from people who didn't want answers so they could help people, but from critics who want ammunition to discredit the answer-giver. If a sincere struggler had asked Jesus the same question, would He have answered differently? I believe so. More about that later.

In addition to keeping the context in mind we must...

B. Keep in mind this isn't the only passage on the subject. Divorce is a complex subject because divorce involves complex people and often complicated circumstances. Please remember that what you're about to hear isn't all the Bible has to say about divorce, nor is it all Jesus had to say about it. Other important passages would include: Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:1-12, and 1 Corinthians 7, for starters.

So there's point one. Jesus received a question about divorce. "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

II. Jesus gave an answer about divorce (3-9).

As we look at Jesus' answer, it's vital that we consider, not just *what* He says, but *where* He goes to justify what He says. In His answer Jesus pointed His hearers (and us) in two directions.

A. Go to the Scriptures (3-4). In verse 3, "He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?'" Moses, of course, is the person through whom God revealed the first

³ J. Vernon McGee, pp. 121-2.

give books in the Book, His Holy Word. So Jesus points those who had questions about divorce to the Book, to the Scriptures, to God's Word.

This is basic, yet vital. When it comes to difficult questions (like whether divorce is acceptable, or any other question), where we go to support our conclusions matters. The truth is, our opinions just cloud the issue. The question is, what has God said about the matter? To find that answer, we must go to His Word. As Jesus did.

In verse 4, "They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.'" That's interesting. Their answer indicates their motive, doesn't it? "Is it lawful?" they had asked. But they already know what the law said, and they actually cite the law, specifically, Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

Now notice another contrast, this time between the way Jesus used the Scriptures and the way the Pharisees did.

1. *The Lord used the Bible to deal with problems.* On the other hand...

2. *The Pharisees used the Bible to cause problems.* And they were good at it.

They loved to debate the Bible, even delicate subjects like divorce. And if they could use the Bible to get something they wanted, in this case to get rid of Jesus, they did so.

We must be careful how we use the Bible, dear friends. God gave His Word to us to be a light, not a fire-starter.

So, what did God say through Moses about divorce? "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away," they said. And they were right, at least as far as they went.

Let's talk for a moment about what life was like in ancient middle-eastern culture. Women had very few (if any) rights. A woman was basically "at the complete disposal of the male head of the family," as Barclay puts it.⁴

Men had the legal power to divorce their wives, and they did. Women did not have this power. Even under Jewish law, a wife could not divorce her husband. She could only ask her husband to divorce her. And the only grounds for which a woman could claim a divorce were these: if her husband was a leper, if he engaged in a disgusting trade such as that of a tanner, if he ravished a virgin, or if he falsely accused her of sexual sin.⁵

This is what happens in a world that turns away from the Creator, just as the Creator said it would right after the first man and woman turned from Him. "Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you," said the Lord to Eve in Genesis 3:16.

When centuries later God gave Israel the Mosaic law, it wasn't to solve this problem. The law can't solve this problem. Only someone who can change hearts can solve this problem. But the law did put some protective measures in place while the world waited for the One who changes hearts to come.

This is where Deuteronomy 24 enters the picture. When the Lord gave these laws, He did so to protect, not only His reputation, but His people, and especially women.

The law in Deuteronomy 24 offered this protection to a wife. It retrained her husband from whimsically choosing to discard her like a piece of unwanted furniture. The law said a man had to get a "bill of divorcement." Without that clause a man could have acted impulsively, kicked his wife out of the home, and caused her to be a social outcast. So the Mosaic law, in part, prevented wives from being the victim of a selfish husband's whim.

⁴ Barclay, p. 238.

⁵ Barclay, p. 238.

This is significant. When God gave Israel the instruction that the Pharisees are citing, He wasn't endorsing divorce per se, but was regulating it. Indeed, He was seeking to restrain it and make it more difficult for men to break their marriage bond. While the world waited for the One who changes hearts to come.

The truth is, the Law was good. It was truly pro-marriage in a world that denigrated marriage. But God's good law couldn't bring about what it legislated. It could not change the hearts of sinful husbands and wives. And one of the ways this sinfulness manifested itself was this. It wasn't long before the Jews began to mistake God's gracious provision in allowing divorce as His approval of it.

And this is what Jesus is addressing. And He does so by pointing His hearers in two directions. First, He says, go the Scriptures. Next, He says...

B. Go back to the beginning (5-9). Notice verses 5-9, "And Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'"

The Pharisees went back to Moses, but needed to go back further, to God's original intent in creation. Just like we do. And when we go back to the beginning, here's what we discover, five important insights that are vital to consider when talking about divorce.

1. *God created us (6).* "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female (NIV).'" Why are we here? Because God created us. And how did He create us? As male and female, Jesus emphasizes, referring to Genesis 1:27.

Please note that our world-view matters. If we buy the notion that we've evolved by random chance, then who has the right to tell me what I can do with my life, and sexuality, and marriage, and everything else? But if there is a Creator, that changes everything.

And there is. And He makes it clear in the Owner's Manual that our sexuality exists according to His design. He created two sexes, male and female.

Is that important to see? Yes. By design, by *God's* design, marriage is between a man and a woman, says Jesus. Not between two men, nor between two women. Don't miss Jesus' emphasis on "male and female." Can two men be friends? Yes. Can two women be friends? Yes. But they cannot be married, not according to Jesus, for that would be a violation of the Creator's good intent.

Furthermore, it is the Creator's intent that the bond between a man and a woman be the most intimate relationship in the human race. The parent-child relationship is wonderful. The bond between two good friends is special. But this goes further. In the marriage bond, a man and a woman become *one flesh*. Two people become one, not just one in spirit, but "one flesh."

Wiersbe observes, "Since marriage is a physical union, only a physical cause can break it—either death (Rom 7:1-3) or fornication (Matt 5:32; 19:9)."⁶ More about what can cause a marriage to break apart in a moment. For now, a second sight...

2. *God created marriage (7).* "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife..." That's a quotation of Genesis 2:24, and the quote continues in verse 8, "And the two will become one flesh."

⁶ Wiersbe, p. 144.

God created marriage. When two people marry, it's more than a social contract. They are entering a covenantal relationship that God Himself established. Marriage occurs when a man leaves his parents and then enters into a one-flesh bond with his wife.

And there are tremendous implications here as well, such as this. When two people marry their new relationship takes precedence over their ties to their parents. They are to *leave* and *cleave*. Much marital discord results from a failure to leave and cleave. When the husband-wife relationship takes back seat to the parent-child relationship, that's bad for the husband and wife, AND for the kids. And worse, it's a direct violation of the Creator's good intent for His image-bearers.

Isn't it interesting how Jesus turned the discussion about divorce into a discussion about marriage? That's something we ought to do. People want to debate the grounds for divorce. It would be better to urge people to consider the importance of marriage, especially *before* they marry.

J. Vernon McGee's observation is timely, "I have so many questions from people asking about the grounds for divorce. When they are ready to get married, they never talk to the preacher. They are not interested in finding out whether he would approve or not; their only question is whether he will marry them." And then he adds, "The basic problem is marrying the wrong person. It looks to me like we are locking the stable after the horse is gone. There are people getting married who ought not to get married."⁷

A lot of wisdom there. Now a third insight.

3. *When two people marry they become one (8)*. "So [now Jesus is drawing a conclusion based on the two Genesis quotes] they are no longer two, but one." This too is quite significant. When two people say "I do" before God and witnesses, something amazing occurs. Something new results, something that wasn't there before.

Two people become one. They may look the same on the outside, but in God's eyes, a new one-flesh-reality just came into existence. And if their marriage is going to be all that God intends, and all that their hearts long for it to be, they must learn to function in light of this new reality.

They must function as one. Not two bank accounts. Not two independent lifestyles. It must be *one* now. And if they fail to function as one (in the way they view money, child-raising, career pursuits, and everything else), they will likely drift apart and most assuredly never know the amazing intimacy He intends for them.

4. *When two people marry, it's supposed to be permanent (9)*. "Therefore [here comes the punchline for Jesus; based on the facts that God created us and marriage, and based on the fact that when two people marry they become one, this follows...] what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Man must never take it upon himself to take apart what God has joined together. Dearly beloved, God intends for marriage to be permanent.

When two people marry, there is one word that ought not be in their vocabulary, and that's divorce. Young people, if you're not ready to commit your life to that person, then please don't get married. It's till death. And living together before getting married isn't a viable option either, no matter how acceptable it is with your peers. This too is a violation of the Creator's good intentions for the marriage bond, and living together before marriage sets in motion a host of negative outcomes that will make marriage more difficult, not easier.

Why then does divorce exist anyway? Look back at what Jesus says in verse 5, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment." There's the answer.

⁷ J. Vernon McGee, pp. 119, 121.

5. *Divorce exists because people have a heart problem (5).* And this is why God gave instructions about divorce in the mosaic Law. Not because He favors divorce, but because He knows the heart problem of His image-bearers. Without these guidelines, selfish men would have been quick to give way to their fickle hearts, forsake the wife of their youth, and engage in adulterous interaction with other women while still married.

The Law prohibited that. As Cole observes, “Better, ...we might paraphrase, easy divorce than open adultery and defiance of all marriage codes. It was the lesser of two evils in Israel, but its very existence showed a fatal flaw in humanity, to which Jesus drew attention.”⁸

Brothers and sisters, God established guidelines for marriage. And God also established certain guidelines to allow for divorce. His desire is for marriages to last, and for couples in those marriages to be committed to each other, and work through the inevitable problems that come. But as a last resort, He does permit divorce, as He explains elsewhere in His Word, in the cases of adultery and desertion.

So the Lord makes allowance for something that wasn't included in His creation plan. Why would He do that? Because He's merciful, and we're not living in that first paradise. We're living in a post-Genesis 3 world, where we all enter this world with a bent to go our own way.

This is why divorce exists. It's because we have a heart problem. What is this heart problem? It is sin. It's a sinful nature that we've inherited from Adam and Eve. And it's a nature that leads to sinful, self-centered choices.

When two sinners marry, they are in trouble from the start, unless. Unless they come to know the One who changes the sinner's self-focused heart. When God gave Moses this instruction about divorce, He was graciously giving His people deterrents to keep sinners in check. That's essentially what the Law is. The Law can't change a sinner, but it can deter sin. And this same Law makes it clear that we need someone who can rescue us from a problem that we cannot fix.

This is why Jesus came. Jesus, who Himself kept the law perfectly, died for law-breakers, to rescue them, to offer them pardon, and then transform them, and make them new.

“Come to me,” said Jesus in Matthew 11:28–29, “all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Are you heavy laden this morning? Come to Jesus and enter into yoke with Him.

I appreciate this pastoral observation by J. Vernon McGee. It's worthy of our attention. “It may likewise be said that murder was not in His plan, but murderers have been forgiven. Divorce is a sin, but divorced people can be forgiven. And I think that under certain circumstances divorced people can be remarried; that is, from a scriptural viewpoint. I don't know why we will forgive a murderer but often refuse to forgive a divorced person. We act almost as if he has committed the unpardonable sin. People who are saved after securing a divorce ought not to bear the stigma any more than any other sinner who has been saved. We are all sinners saved by grace.”⁹

Point one, Jesus receives a controversial question (1-2). Point two, Jesus gives a concrete answer (3-9). But He's not done.

III. Jesus gave another answer about divorce (10-12).

⁸ Cole, p. 228.

⁹ J. Vernon McGee, p. 120.

Notice verse 10, “And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.” Who asked the second question? Not the Pharisees this time, but the disciples. What Jesus just said apparently caused the disciples to think of further questions.

Matthew’s account indicates the disciples responded, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry (Matt 19:10).”

In verses 11-12, Jesus responded to their confusion. “And he said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’”

Matthew’s account includes more of Jesus’ response than does Mark’s account. They were writing for different original audiences. Matthew is addressing Greek-speaking Jews. Mark has a Roman audience in mind, and his readers weren’t as familiar with the Old Testament as were Matthew’s. Mark shows Jesus emphasizing three realities.

A. He emphasized the seriousness of divorce. “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.” Again, Mark has a Roman audience in mind. In the Roman Empire, immorality was rampant and excused, much as in our day. Mark wants his readers see that Jesus calls His followers to a higher standard than the world accepts. In Mark’s day, divorce was easy and common, again, just as it is in ours. Mark’s intent isn’t to deal with exceptions. His intent is to highlight how serious a marriage commitment is, and how serious it is to break that commitment.

Yes, these are strong words, but Mark knew his audience needed them. So do we.

You may be thinking, “Earlier you said there may be grounds for divorce. In Matthew’s account, Jesus gives a ground for divorce, doesn’t He?”

Yes, we read these words of Jesus in Matthew 19:9 (NIV), “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, *except for marital unfaithfulness*, and marries another woman commits adultery.” What does “marital unfaithfulness” mean? The Greek word is *porneia*, and the ESV says “sexual immorality.” Ed Dobson says there are three basic interpretations:

One, the “Engagement View.” This view holds that the word *porneia* means “fornication” and refers specifically to premarital sex. In NT times marriage actually began with the engagement covenant. An engaged couple was legally married, though the marriage was not finalized until twelve to fifteen months later. This view says that *porneia* refers to unfaithfulness during this betrothal period. The problem with this view is that in the Bible *porneia* refers to illicit sexual relationships in general, not just premarital sex.

Two, the “Incest View.” People who hold this view believe *porneia* refers to the marrying of a close relative. But this view doesn’t fit the data well either.

Three, the “Illicit Sex” view. Here *porneia* refers to illicit sexual behavior in general. It’s a broad term that can refer to all types of sexual immorality including incest, sodomy, harlotry, perversion, and all sexual sin before and after marriage. This view seems most likely.¹⁰

Again, in contrast with the school of Hillel which allowed for divorce for any trivial reason, Jesus seems to be saying that when there’s sexual immorality, there may be grounds for divorce. I add, *may be grounds*, because of what Jesus teaches elsewhere about forgiveness (Matthew 18:15, 21-22, 23-35), for if the one guilty of sexual immorality repents, the marriage can be restored, by His grace and for His glory.

¹⁰ Dobson, 65.

For the sake of time, allow me to summarize. By taking into account the three texts in which Jesus addresses the subject of divorce (Matthew 5:31-32, Matt 19:1-12, and Mark 10:1-12,) we can draw five conclusions:

- a. God's intent is for marriage to last a lifetime.
- b. God did not institute divorce, but He did regulate it.
- c. All divorces stem from sin, though not all divorces are sinful.

No marriage falls apart because two people are doing what pleases God. Ultimately, a marriage dissolves because of sin. But not every divorce is sinful. A person may have biblical grounds to end the marriage. Though divorce is never the ideal, there are times when it is permissible. Such as when?

- d. There is one ground for divorce among believers, which is *porneia*.
- e. When there has been *porneia*, a believer *may* divorce his spouse.¹¹

Again, I emphasize the word *may*. The Bible does not require divorce in such cases, but does permit it. Indeed, it's a beautiful thing to see a person guilty of *porneia* repent, and be reconciled to God and his spouse.

Is it possible? Sometimes. Remember Hosea? His wife, Gomer, was guilty of *porneia* in a glaring way. Yet he remained faithful to her, and eventually restored her to the Lord and to himself.

Dear ones, before leaving this point, let's talk about three significant implications. The first? If you are married, please cherish your spouse. The second? Whether married or not, let's all encourage others to do the same. The third? Let's help those who are in trouble. If you know of a couple that is struggling, please encourage them to seek biblical counseling. We have trained men and women ready to serve.

But there's more. Jesus emphasized that divorce is serious, yes, but also this.

B. He emphasized the value of women. I mentioned earlier that one of the reasons God gave guidelines for divorce in Deuteronomy 24 was to protect women. It's noteworthy that Jesus here refers both to a situation where a man divorces his wife (11) and to one where a wife divorces her husband (12). In so doing, Jesus did what the rabbis refused to do.

Wessel explains, "He recognized that a man could commit adultery against his wife. In rabbinic Judaism a woman by infidelity could commit adultery against her husband; and a man, by having sexual relations with another man's wife, could commit adultery against *him* [emphasis added]. But a man could never commit adultery against his wife, no matter what he did. Jesus, by putting the husband under the same moral obligation as the wife, raised the status and dignity of women."¹²

And this brings us to a third reality, and it's the most important.

C. He emphasized the need for the cross. Jesus uses the word "adultery" in verse 11 and again in verse 12. Adultery, a violation of the seventh of God's Ten Commandments, was a sin punishable by death in the Old Testament economy. When someone enters into a sexual relationship with a person who is not their spouse, it is adultery. It is not simply an "affair," but a sin that God says is a violation of the marriage covenant.

You say, "How does this point us to the cross?"

Here's how, in a powerful, grace-filled way. According to Jesus...

1. *God hates adultery, as He does all sin.* And "the wages of sin is death," says God in His Word in Romans 6:23. But here's where we see the beauty of grace.

¹¹ If a divorce is granted on biblical grounds, then the "innocent" party is permitted to remarry.

¹² Wessel, p. 712.

2. *God loves sinners and sent His Son to rescue them.* That's why Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem in Mark 10, to rescue sinners, every kind of sinner, including adulterers, as well as liars, gossips, and the rest. Yes, God hates sin, and that's why He sent His Son to the cross, to pay sin's penalty. But God loves sinners and will accept any sinner who will repent and receive His Son as their Savior and Lord.

I urge you to see your need for the cross today, my friend. Come to the One who gave His life for sinners, and He will save you.

Make It Personal: Do I believe in the Jesus that I see in Mark 10?

What Jesus have we seen in Mark 10? We've seen a Jesus that loves the Bible and solves problems by quoting it. We've seen a Jesus who values marriage and upholds its sanctity. We've seen a Jesus who says hard things to us about our sin, but also a Jesus who Himself is willing to do hard things to enable us to do the hard things He requires of us. Do you believe in this Jesus?

In a moment we're going to sing a song entitled, "*More About Jesus*" that says, "*More about Jesus would I know, more of His grace to others show; More of His saving fullness see, more of His love who died for me.*" We've just learned more about Him. And it makes us want to know even more, doesn't it?

Closing Song: #389 "*More About Jesus*" (all four verses)

Benediction of the month: Revelation 22:21 (ESV)

Community Group Discussion:

1. This morning's message from Mark 10:1-12 was, "*Learning about Jesus from a Question about Divorce.*" As you read the passage, keep in mind this question, and then discuss it together. What do we learn about Jesus from what He does and says in this passage?
2. Divorce, in biblical times and today, is a controversial subject. Who brought up the subject with Jesus in verses 1-2, and why? Do you think Jesus would have given a different answer if someone else had asked the question, and if so, why?
3. How did Jesus answer the divorce-question in verse 3, and why is that significant? What follow-up answer did He give in verses 5-8? What does Jesus say about divorce? What does He say about marriage? On what authority does He base His teaching, and why is that significant for us?
4. In verses 10-12 the disciples ask a follow-up question about divorce. What answer does Jesus give this time? What effect did His answer have on the disciples (see Matthew 19:9-11)? How does Jesus' teaching affect you?
5. Why is it important to keep the rest of the story of Mark's gospel in mind (chapters 10-16) when wrestling with a difficult passage like Mark 10?