

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship
May 31, 2020
“Grounds for Divorce?”

Sunday school at 8:30, in-person Services at 9:15 & 10:45 with King’s Kids (Video live-taped sermon online by Monday afternoon).

NEWS

Church camp at Little Bitterroot Lake, August 14-16.

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Getting along with others is a requirement. A requirement that goes hand-in-hand with forgiving others... The latter is the means of the former... Forgiveness enables unity.

The person who gets how much they need forgiveness, who is then forgiven unilaterally, is a person so humbly grateful that they also forgive.

Forgiven people are forgiving people.

MATTHEW 19:1&2

The “Beyond the Jordan,” phrase means that Jesus travelled through Perea to avoid going through Samaria and then crossed the Jordan River near Jericho, back into the province of Judea.

“Large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there,” may be more of a comment on the crowds than on Jesus...

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

MATTHEW 19:3-6

The two most influential Rabbinical schools training Pharisees, in the first century, had divergent opinions about divorce. They interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1 differently.

Shammai focused on the word, “Offensive” (indecent), and Hillel focused on the word “Something” (anything). The Pharisees didn’t care about Jesus’ answer - they just wanted to *πειράζω* (*pā-rā-dzō*), trap Him.

MATTHEW 19:4-6

With His reference to the “Beginning,” Jesus implies that His argument goes back to Genesis 1:1. There cannot be a weightier passage (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:22-25, 5:1&2).

God could have done anything... He chose two completely complimentary genders.

God joined the two of them together in His sight and He declared that the two of them were no longer two separate individuated persons, but one with each other - a single entity... Partners... Quite literally of completely equal value to God, but, never with identical bodies, nor identical roles.

Once a young man marries, his highest human allegiance is to his wife.

MATTHEW 19:7-9

They said, “Why did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce?” Jesus responded, “Moses permitted.” What did Moses actually say? Deuteronomy 24:1-4a.

This isn’t about legalistic maneuverings, it’s about honoring God by honoring marriage in general and your own marriage in particular.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon/Elder

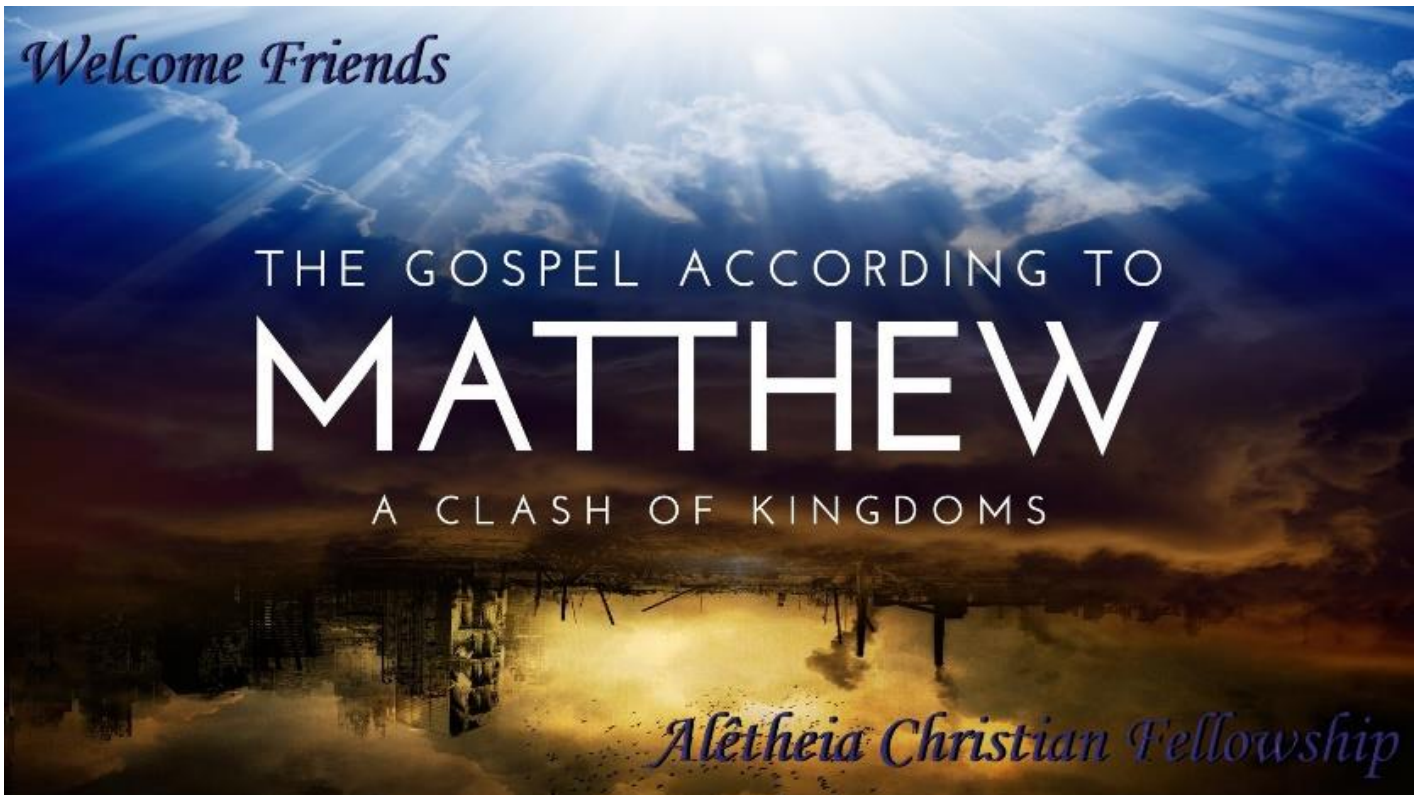
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Phone _____ Email _____

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 19a ~ 053120
“Grounds for Divorce?”



Flathead: Not a single new case for a month and a half.
2 active hospitalizations in the state.



We spent some time in chapter 18 and what we now know is that the whole chapter can be boiled down to this proposition... As a requirement of Christianity, we

must, get along well with others. The activity of church unity is the proof of God-given love for one another and by extension love for God.

This unity can only be achieved if we Christians are so humbly grateful for what God has done for us that we have no time to be arrogantly superior to anyone.



Jesus said it before - you will not be forgiven if you don't forgive. Maybe you put God's forgiveness of you on one side of the scale, and your forgiveness of someone else on the other side and figure you'll forgive a little and get a little forgiveness in return.

It doesn't work that way. In both the Lord's Prayer and here in chapter 18, Jesus is using the concept of the Father's forgiveness as another way to say a Saved person. If you don't forgive others you cannot be saved, cannot be a Christian, cannot be Christ's Disciple, or the Father's child... Such people simply are not part of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I already said getting along well with others was a requirement. A requirement that goes hand-in-hand with forgiving others... The latter is the means of the former. Forgiveness enables unity.

Even so, it might seem like this is another salvation hoop to jump through - another prerequisite to check off the list in order to be saved. Nothing could be further from the Truth... This cannot be salvation through Jesus plus being a forgiving person.

Salvation is through Jesus and Jesus alone - nothing else but Jesus. Trust in Him. Accept His personal sacrifice as your own. Let the Spirit of God stand you up in the accepting presence of the Father because of the righteousness of Jesus alone.

Beyond that, you can't really be a forgiving person without the indwelling Holy Spirit that only comes as a result of being a Christian... So, what's going on here?

The person who gets how much they need a Savior, who is then Saved unilaterally, strictly due to the goodness, mercy and kindness of God - His self-sacrificing love unleashed upon you a sinner who never deserved any of it - well then, you are a person so humbly grateful to be part of God's family in the Body of Christ and filled with His Holy Spirit, that you gladly overlook the faults, fumbblings and failures of those around you. If you get how much you need forgiveness and how impossible it is to earn and then realize that it's been granted as a gift... You will be forgiving. If not... You simply don't get it.

I'll confess that over the years flying jets, I have often flown with guys I didn't like. Three or four days cramped in a cockpit, just a couple of feet away from an annoying person. What joy. When my poor attitude would show and occasionally the other guy would ask if I were alright, I would reply, "I'm just happy to be here."

It was the right words - the right concept - if not the right disposition.

Well, my dear friends, with the recognition of what we have bountifully and undeservedly received and with the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us, we should have the right words and the right disposition in the church.

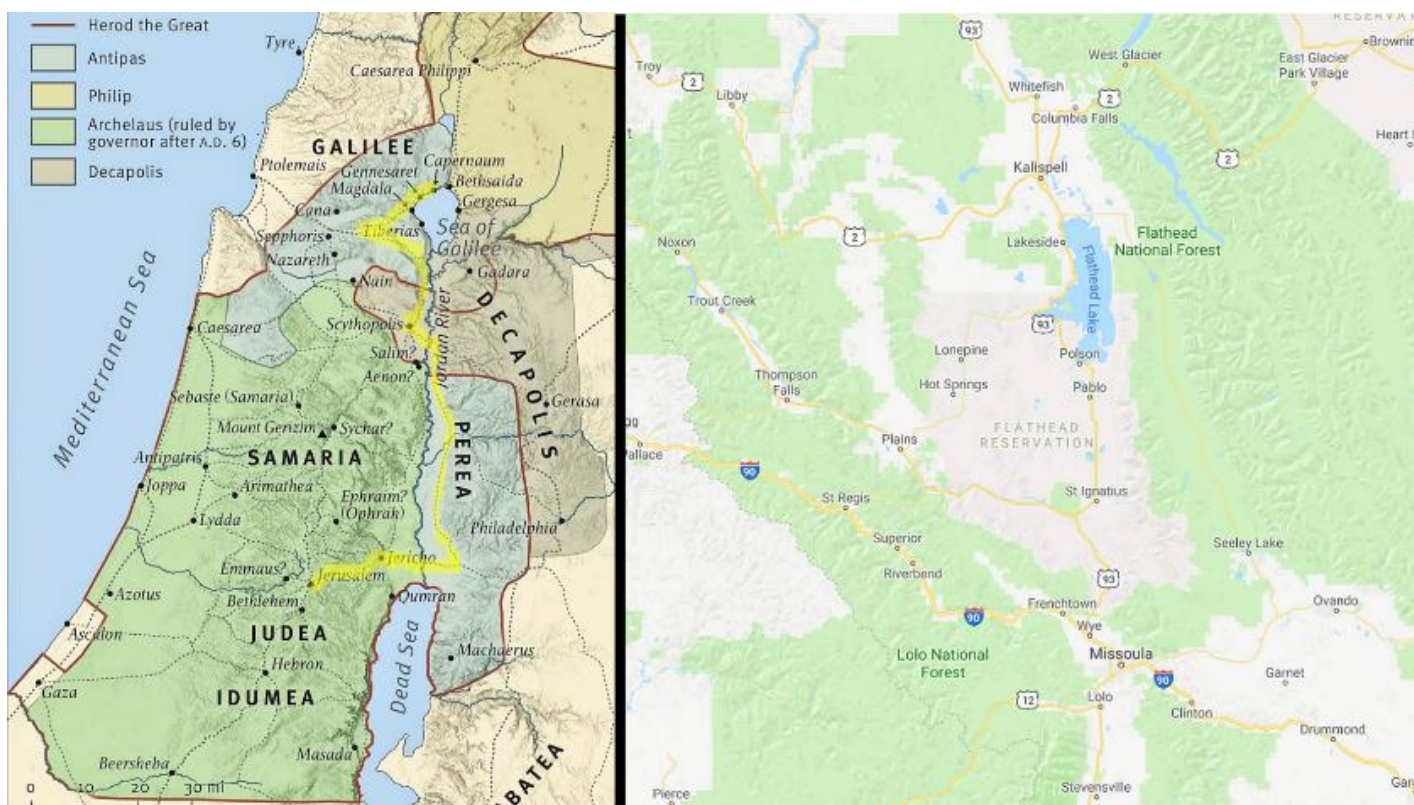
That's Jesus' point with the final parable. If we don't have those words and the disposition to go with them, we just don't get Grace - how can someone who doesn't understand Grace, be saved.

The idea that being Saved means a future in the good place as opposed to the bad place, distorts the Truth that being Saved really means actively following Christ Jesus come what may.

Being a Christian does not mean that your eternal address has changed, it means that you are a Spirit-filled disciple of Christ in obedience to the Father. If that's not true, you're not a Christian... That's the point.

Forgiven people are forgiving people. Now, it is true that we are imperfect and that we continue to struggle with obedience to include forgiving others. The difference is the conviction and the desire to change.

The Saved person who understands will, when they are made aware of their own unforgiveness, be convicted by the Holy Spirit and they will want to resolve that conviction by working with the Holy Spirit to grow in that area.



Matthew 19:1&2NASB, 1When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; 2and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

Jesus finished teaching about church unity and once again moved a little closer to His final destination. Some folks get confused about the “Beyond the

Jordan,” phrase and think Jesus was ministering in Perea, Herod Antipas’ other province that is in modern-day Jordan.

Actually, it means that Jesus travelled through Perea to avoid going through Samaria and then crossed the Jordan River near Jericho, back into the province of Judea. This is the area that John the Baptizer ministered and where he had baptized Jesus three years earlier. We are now in the late Fall of most likely 29 A.D., or perhaps, 32 A.D. Jesus was either crucified on Friday, April 7, 30 A.D., or on Friday, April 3, 33 A.D. The first is the more scholarly date and the latter is the more traditional date.

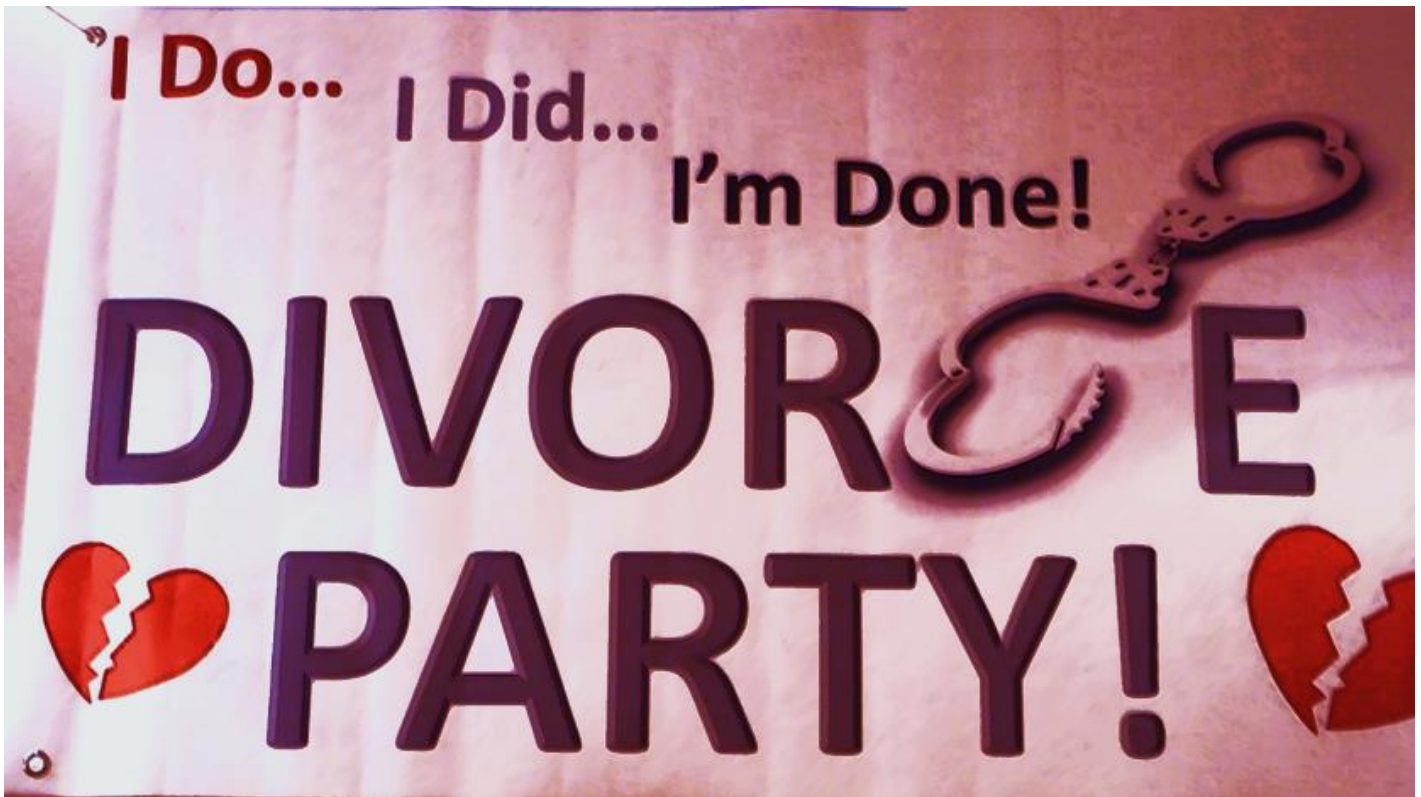




The note that “Large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there,” may be more of a comment on the crowds than on Jesus... The crowds followed Him to get something from Him, not because they were devoted to Him. Whether that’s Matthew’s point here, or not, it will turn out to be true. The question for us... Is do we follow Jesus because of what we get out of it, or because we are devoted to Him personally?



Can we honestly affirm the words of the song? Is the whole world and all it contains rubbish to us in comparison to Jesus?



Matthew 19:3-6NASB, 3Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”

The two most influential Rabbinical schools training Pharisees, in the first century, had divergent opinions about divorce. They interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1 differently. That verse says, 1NETIf a man marries a woman and she does not please him because he has found something offensive in her, then he may draw up a divorce document, give it to her, and evict her from his house.



From that, both schools concluded that divorce was okay, but they differed in their interpretation of sufficient grounds for divorce. On the one hand, the school of Shammai focused on the word, “Offensive.” It is better translated as “Indecent.” It most likely referred to outrageous, lewd, or improper behavior in a wife that would cause embarrassment to her husband.

You can already see how dramatically different their society was compared to ours... In those days, women were property. They were the property of their father and then they were handed off to be the property of their husband. If no husband or father, then the closest

male relative. It is much the same today in other parts of the world.

Anyway, women were not allowed to divorce at all, for any reason... And even if they could get away from male domination, where would they go? What would they do? Especially if she had kids. You're thinking, yeah, she'd have to figure out how to support her kids as well as herself... No, she wouldn't. She would have no right to her kids. Anyway, if you're female, just thank God that you were born here, at this time. While I'm on that, why do you suppose things have never been better for women than in Western society in this age? It has everything to do with Christian influence.

So, Shammai said if a wife indecently embarrassed her husband, he could eject her. We generally try to make this about serious adultery - that's not the case, because the Law stipulated that a wife committing adultery must be stoned to death. This is behavior far short of an extramarital affair. That's the stern view.

Hillel, the grandfather of Gamaliel, who was the Apostle Paul's teacher, focused on the word "Something." What I mean is that while Shammai defined indecency, Hillel defined "Something," which is more accurately,

“Anything.” “Anything indecent.” What does “Anything” constitute? Well, literally anything. Hillel’s school taught that a man could eject his wife for anything that he felt was indecent, including, specifically, overcooking his dinner.



The “Large crowd,” following Jesus was made up of Jews who would have had strong opinions regarding the question of a husband’s right not to be saddled with a wife he no longer wanted... That’s why the Pharisee’s question was a test - a trap. Our friend, πειράζω (pā-rä-dzō), one of the names of the Devil... It is to tempt, or trick into a trap, or a fall.

The Pharisees didn't care about Jesus' answer - they couldn't have cared less what He thought on the matter. They weren't there to get instructed in the finer details of the Law - they believed they were the experts. The Pharisees asked this question solely to mess with Jesus and get the people to turn against Him.

It was a controversial subject and so it was a good ploy - Jesus was trapped - there was no way to answer without angering and alienating at least half the crowd.



Jesus is so great... It is masterful what happens next...
Matthew 19:4-6NASB, 4And He answered and said,

“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5and 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’? 6“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

The general gist and impact you just got is important. We don't want to lose that. Looking deeper, you can see how Jesus turned things around by answering a much deeper, far more foundational question that they didn't ask. A question that they and their teachers had completely lost sight of in their pursuit to answer human questions. We always want to know what the rules are regarding the things that interest us. We are always quantifying and clarifying and extrapolating Scripture to cover things beyond the context. We seek out passages that we can bend and twist to give us a basis for our conclusions. It's human nature to establish legalistic black and white rules with universal applicability, rather than be guided by sweeping principles. Why? It's infinitely easier than thinking.

There's a lot going on here and I want to dig into the details a bit because it's what we do, but by doing so,

we'll be able to appreciate Jesus' incredible genius as well as His methodology of Biblical interpretation, which will help us to become better interpreters of the Bible in general.

In Pharisaic Rabbinical Judaism, the older a passage of Scripture, the more weight it carried. With His reference to the "Beginning," Jesus implies that His argument goes back to Genesis 1:1. There cannot be any weightier passage than that. The bulk of His argument comes from Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:22-25, and Genesis 5:1&2. The final line is Jesus' own pronouncement based upon the Biblical principle found in the very beginning of God's interaction with humans. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Now, going back a bit... The opening, "Have you not read," is a slap in the face. Jesus was saying, "You're here as Biblical experts - and yet, you don't even understand what's essentially on the first page of the Bible... Have you even read the Book?"

It was evident from the very "Beginning," that God chose to create human beings in only one of two compatible forms - male and female. God could have

done an infinite number of different things - He chose this a single man joined together with a single woman - that's what He chose.

He could have forced Adam to be alone - people could be created from mud each time and set in a Garden all to themselves. God could have given Adam another male and enabled some kind of androgynous, or asexual procreation.

God could have made for Adam 72 virgins. He could have made thousands of people, each with a different gender where compatibility between them all may, or may not, exist... God could have done anything... He chose two completely complimentary genders. Because of the Fall, there are some issues, but that is the ideal.

Incidentally, that's also why this is the correct argument to use in the confused gender, confused sexuality of our day.

Anyway, God created one man and from him, He created one woman... Why? Why didn't God take some more earth and breath into it to create Eve?

If He had, Eve would be autonomous, but doing it as He did, Eve is inextricably linked to Adam - The first woman came from man and all other men come from woman - we are all the same kin.

God joined the two of them together in His sight and He declared that the two of them were no longer two separate individuated persons, but that they were one with each other - a single entity... Quite literally, partners... Quite literally of completely equal value to God, but, my dear friends, never with identical bodies, nor identical roles.

Was that it? Was God establishing this union for Adam and Eve alone? Was it only for the Garden where this duality of the one was to exist?

Not even close. A man cannot leave his father and mother, unless he has parents. This was not for Adam and Eve - this was for their descendants. Is there any indication that it would be for a finite time - is there an end to this principle in the Bible implied or explicit? No, none, in fact it is repeatedly affirmed.

You might think of all the shenanigans that go on in the history of the Jews, like King Solomon with his 700 wives and 300 concubines.

The Bible never condones polygamy, homosexuality, bestiality, adultery, prostitution, or any other deviation from one man and one woman married under God, even though it is chalk full of those things. The result of all such activity in the Bible is disaster.

The Bible indicates that it was Solomon's predilection for womanizing that cost the Jews a united kingdom under God's favor.

Maybe you're not convinced. The entire point of stating it the way it is stated in Genesis and quoted by Jesus is demonstrate the divine sanctity of marriage. That a man leaves his own father and mother and is joined instead to his wife is interesting and has caused some confusion, because Jewish men, when married, continued to live in the same housing complex with their parents, siblings, and other extended relatives - they didn't "Leave" at all.

It's not literal, it's conceptual... It is the principle that as a young person your highest human allegiance is to

your parents. No other duty supersedes obedience to one's parents, other than obedience to God... For you young people out there, nothing has changed that either.

Once a young man marries, his highest human allegiance is now to his wife. Their relationship supersedes their previous relationship to their parents.

I cannot overemphasize how significant this is in that culture. If you get married, your family now begins with your spouse... Every other human relationship must take a back seat to that reality... Including our cultural shift to putting our children on a pedestal. If you care more about your kids than you do about your spouse, you are just as wrong as the Jew 3,500 years ago who cared more about his childhood family than his wife.

Jesus' deduction from the creative activity of God was that since the two have become one - let no one try to split them apart. That applies to the sanctity of an individual marriage, but goes beyond to include the institution of marriage.

Satan works overtime trying to overthrow God's plan for mankind. One area that has always come under

attack is the sanctity of marriage, in whatever form it comes. Polygamy, prostitution, cohabitation, wantonness, and for our society today... homosexuality.

Our United States of America government has declared that marriage is just as valid between two same gender people as it is between one man and one woman as God instituted. That is an overt attack on God's plan for mankind in the arena of sanctity of marriage. That is a clear violation of Jesus' declaration, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."



Matthew 19:7-9NASB, 7They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce

and send her away?” 8He 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. 9“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

The Pharisees didn't like Jesus' answer, because He essentially sidestepped their trap, so they put a finer point on their original question. They said, “Why did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce?” Jesus responded, “Moses permitted.” Well, what did Moses actually say?



Deuteronomy 24:1-4aNIV, 1If 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, 2and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 3and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, 4athen her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again...

You see the passage wasn't about grounds for a divorce at all. The passage established a double protection for women. Firstly, a man couldn't just kick his wife out... If he was displeased, he had to give her a certificate showing that she was free of him and able to remarry.

Please understand that a woman in those days could not survive without the support of a man in one way or another. The certificate gave her legal freedom from her husband.

Secondly, it protected a wife from a frivolous separation. A husband had to officially divorce and

knew that he could never have her back again if she did remarry.

The Pharisees, in their second question, key in on Moses' command that a husband must properly free his wife, if he didn't want her anymore, but they twisted it to stress that a husband was completely free to do so as long as he wrote the certificate. That's not what God said through His man Moses.

The entire argument proceeded from a small passage dealing with remarriage to a first husband after marriage to a second. The Jewish Rabbis Shammai and Hillel, extrapolated from the passage that God must be okay with divorce under certain circumstances of the passage wouldn't be in the Bible in the first place.

Therefore, they were simply trying to ferret out what those circumstances would be.

Jesus said they were completely wrong from the basis onward. God wasn't giving permission to divorce, He was, through Moses, establishing some guidelines for when men violated his plan and through hard-hearted

selfish disregard for the sanctity of marriage, that He created and ordained, chose to divorce anyway.



Jesus then, from the founding principles, made an even more profound and thoroughly shocking declaration. You men, want to get rid of your wife due to your own selfish lust for another... Whether you jump through the right hoops or not, it is what it is, it's adultery.

Now, we just saw how we take a Biblical comment about one thing and try to extrapolate it to another. In our Matthew encounter... The Bible is not teaching about the proper grounds for divorce, nor is it teaching about adultery or remarriage... This is Jesus' answer to

a trap. Beyond that it is Jesus taking a Biblical principle established at the opening of the Bible and applying it as a principle, rather than trying to turn it into a legal code.

What is the number one reason a man divorces his wife then and now? It should be so obvious that it goes without saying. If you think the most common reason is anything other than a desire to be with a different woman, you probably are a woman.

Jesus was saying no matter how a man would rationalize that, no matter how well he followed the rules in the Bible and beyond, it is still what it is... You cannot fake out God.



Sanctity of marriage. God chose to create the way He did, and He established as the most important human relationship that between a husband and a wife.

This isn't about legalistic maneuverings, it's about honoring God by honoring marriage in general and your own marriage in particular.