



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 19:1-12

KEY POINT: Disciples of Christ strive to think the way that Jesus does about marriage and singleness.

FOR LEADERS

- **Weekly Resources:** As a reminder, the weekly resources (discussion guides, group videos, podcasts, etc.) are posted for you each week both on the Realm Leader’s Group, as well as on our website at emergencenj.org/weeklyresources.
- **Winter Sessions:** Winter Sessions will take place for 6 weeks beginning this December! This season we will be looking at the call to evangelism for our 6-week study.

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video:** Watch this week’s community extras video.
- [2] Icebreaker:** Name small or ridiculous that you probably care WAY too much about!
- [3] Opener:** How did your own personal study go in the workbook this week? Was there anything that you found particularly eye opening?

TOUCHY SUBJECT

This week in our passage, we see Jesus address some of the cultural views of the day concerning marriage, singleness and divorce. During the sermon, Ryan went on to talk about how many people’s opinions of biblical morality are strongly dependent upon how they’ve been disciplined by culture. One example he gave was Sex – people in the modern west would likely disdain the idea that sex is to be enjoyed exclusively within a marriage covenant, whereas the modern east may see it as a beautiful truth.

- [1]** Why do you think our culture has veered so far away from biblical sexual ethics?
- [2]** What are some of the challenges that may come surrounding sex, gender, singleness and divorce in our society today? How does the Gospel challenge our cultural mindset of today?
- [3]** What do you think would be some more effective ways of sharing the truths of the Gospel with someone for whom biblical sexuality is a stumbling block?

THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 19:1-6.

In this passage, the Pharisees attempt to engage Jesus in their debate over what, in God’s eyes, constitutes legitimate grounds for divorce. This seems like a fair question – probably one that we ourselves have wondered.

- [4]** What do you think of Jesus’ response to the Pharisees? Why do you think He points them back to Genesis 2 rather than directly answering them?
- [5]** In light of the permanence of marriage that Jesus attests to in Genesis 2:24, what are some of the problems that can inevitably arise when a Christian marries a non-Christian? How would you personally counsel someone who was struggling through this?



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Leaders: *Jesus’ response to the Pharisees should be a queue for all of us. At any point, if we feel like we have a question that challenges our understanding of Scripture, we should first and foremost go back to what we understand about God’s Word. In other words – what does the Bible say? Before we endeavor to understand how to practically respond to something, we should first understand how God would call us to live. In this instance, Jesus first reminds us of God’s design for marriage – permanence, between one man and one woman. Christians marrying Christians is great, and non-Christians marrying non-Christians is the norm and makes sense. But a Christian marrying a non-Christian is foolish, for many reasons, but chiefly because the heart and understanding of marriage is VASTLY different. Our culture tells us to marry as a “next step” of a committed relationship, until it no longer makes sense. The Bible rather speaks of the permanence of marriage, that should be taken and understood as an act of servanthood that reflects Jesus.*

FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 19:7-9.

Here, the pharisees run afoul of a very serious interpretive misstep – assuming that God in some way condones divorce. Our book for this week explains this in more detail in pages 62-63, but we should understand that just because God tells us what to do “if,” we should not interpret this as permissible. With that said, we also learned that there are, sometimes reasons for divorce in the Bible – namely, abandonment by an unbeliever and serious neglect or abuse.

[6] Consider what Jesus says here in these verse about divorce happening because of our “hardness of heart.” What do you personally make of this? Do you think this is fair for Jesus to say (or imply)?

[7] Why do you think God limits or restricts the grounds for divorce? How does this counter the cultural views of our culture that say that we should “be happy?”

Leaders: *Our culture sees marriage much like it does a dating relationship – they come, they go, and when it doesn’t make sense just move on. But this is in direct opposition of God’s (the author of marriage) design. Marriage is meant to be an example of God’s love for the Church, and what does divorce communicate about the way God loves the Church? The wrong thing.*

FOR THE SAKE OF THE KINGDOM

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 19:10-12.

[8] Why do you think that the disciples respond like they do in verse 10?

[9] Do you personally feel like the Church presents singleness as a credible and fulfilling way to live out the Christian life? What about our culture?

[10] In what way(s) could singleness actually be an advantage?

Leaders: *Singleness has an incredible advantage that our culture often and frequently overlooks – it allows you to run faster for the sake of the Gospel. If we are single, then our call to serve and worship God can be our chief pursuit, but in marriage we are called to also love and serve our spouse as Jesus serves the Church.*

CREATED MALE AND FEMALE





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Notice how Jesus, in verse 4, affirms the testimony of Genesis, that God created mankind to flourish with two equal and complimentary genders: male and female. Ryan rightly pointed out that this is very relevant to modern debates over transgenderism. The church needs to be clear in presenting a biblically-accurate vision of humanity—one in which sex and gender are both essential to our humanity and received by God, rather than determined by us. But he was also right in challenging us to be a place where people wrestling with gender dysphoria can find Jesus, as well as a community of people who love them and are committed to helping them learn what it means to be his disciple in the midst of such struggles.

[11] What hope does the Gospel offer to someone who may be feeling out of place in their own body?

[12] How do you think Christians could do a better job showing Jesus to people with gender dysphoria?

Leaders: *As Ryan mentioned in the sermon, gender dysphoria is a relatively new thing, and the Church probably has not been the best example of love for those struggling with their own gender. At some degree or another we all have identity issues – whether that’s with our career, our relationships, our popularity, or our gender. It shouldn’t matter so much what a person struggles with because the Church is still called to be the Church – to hold up the truths of God and rejoice in the hope we ALL have in Jesus. And we should do this with grace, and love. Remember that Jesus sat next to prostitutes – the cultural abomination of his time – and still loved, served, ministered to, and sacrificed for them. Shouldn’t we do the same?*

PRAYER

[1] Pray that the Lord would help you to treasure both marriage and singleness, and to uphold his standards for both ways of being a Christian.

[2] Pray for opportunities to reach out to those struggling in their pursuit of Jesus, whether in marriage, in singleness, or those facing gender identity issues.