



## “How To Avoid Divorce, & More, Part 2” (Mark 10:1-12)

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Read the text; See Matthew 19:3-12 (the disciples said “then it’s better not to marry”).

We’re gonna springboard from Mark 10 for the next few messages, so if you know of someone who has marriage problems, or problems in any kind of relationship, invite them. If you run into someone out in the marketplace who has marriage or relationship issues, invite them. This is a great outreach opportunity for us as a church.

Debate on the issue of marriage and divorce centered on Deut. 24:1 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent (KJV = uncleanness) about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house.

There were two overall schools of thought in interpreting Deut.24, one was led by a Rabbi Hillel, who taught that a man could divorce his wife for any number of reasons - walking about with her hair down, speaking to men on the street, speaking disrespectfully of her husband’s parents in his presence, even spoiling his dinner! Rabbi Akiba, of the same school of thought, added it also included a husband finding another woman more beautiful. The school of Shammai limited something “indecent” to actions of sexual misconduct.

Both schools of thought readily accepted adultery as grounds for divorce. Under the law, infidelity was punishable by death, but under the Roman legal system, the death sentence for such offenses was difficult to obtain.

Jesus brings them back to the will of God regarding marriage. God’s will is a monogamous, intimate, enduring marriage. Anything less is a departure from the divine model.

Malachi 2: 16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD...

Divorced people should not feel like they have leprosy, especially in the church. Letter I received last week from a concerned mother and grandmother about me doing a series on divorce. I want to help those who may be headed for divorce, to give God an opportunity to turn things around. I want to see singles who will one day be married make the right choice in a lifelong mate. I want to see good marriages become even

better. And I want to see relationships in general that have been strained and broken be reconciled and healed.

Divorce is not the unpardonable sin.

There can be an innocent party in a divorce.

- Spouse commits adultery (biblical grounds for divorce)
- One spouse becomes a Christian and the other spouse leaves because they don't want to be married to a Christian (I Cor.7:15).
- Abuse, etc.

God's very first two children had some pretty serious problems in their marriage relationship (Gen.3); And their first two kids had some pretty serious problems in their relationship with one another (Gen.4). The Bible is filled with saints who struggled in marriage and family relationships (Moses and Zipporah, Gen.4:24-26; Abraham and Sarah; David, Paul & Barnabas, Euodia & Synteche, etc.).

See also Matthew 1, the genealogy of Jesus Christ is filled with dysfunctional people.

Children can survive coming from a home where parents were divorced, etc.

Either Jesus is the answer to all of life's problems, or what are we doing? I John 5:4b...This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

My marriage testimony is similar to the struggle Jacob had in his marriage.

My wife Wendy shared last weekend her side of our marriage testimony. Ladies, thanks again for not stoning me as she shared. If you are interested in a copy of our marriage testimony, it's called "Learning To Love By Faith," and you can pick one up in the bookstore.

See Gen.29:1-18; Jacob has stolen his older brother Esau's birthright, and Esau has threatened to kill Jacob once dad dies. So Jacob is running for his life, headed to his Uncle Laban's house for refuge from his brother. The irony of Jacob's actions is that he never had to steal anything, because the Lord had prophesied that the older would serve the younger (Gen.25:23). But Jacob, nor his mother who devised the wicked plan to deceive her own husband (Isaac), has faith to trust the Lord. Jacob would eventually become a man of faith, but it would take years of painful purging and training before he would get there.

Summarize Gen.29:1-18? This is a man who is really in love! But he is a very immature man in love. What does Jacob's name mean?

29:19-23 Jacob is a deceiver, but it runs in the family, because now his uncle has deceived him!

29:25a Don't ask me how Laban pulled this off, but somehow he did.

29:25b Gal.6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

29:26-27 Laban got some more free labor out of this deal!

29:28-30 "...and he loved Rachel more than Leah."

For 13 years I allowed a stronghold of an emotional attachment to a girl I had dated in college rob me of loving the woman I had made a marriage covenant with.

I can't tell you how many times Wendy & I have shared our marriage testimony and couples have confessed that one of them has a romantic emotional attachment to someone other than their spouse. Sometimes it's the husband who's the Danny in their struggle (a Tammy figure), and sometimes it's the wife who is the Danny (let's call her emotional other "Tommy").

Proverbs 12:11...he who chases fantasies lacks judgment.

Proverbs 30:21 Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up:...an unloved woman who is married.

Even if you would be happier with someone else (99.9999 times not true), if you are a Christian, you will one day have to stand before Jesus and give an account of your life. I used to say to Wendy, when I was looking for the softest way out of the relationship: "In a hundred years, it's not gonna matter." And while that was my lame attempt to soften the blow of yet another break-up, there is truth to the statement. In a hundred years all of us will wish we had done what God wanted us to do in life.

29:31-32 Many wrongly believe that children will change things in the marriage for the better. This is usually not the case. The foundation of the family is the marriage relationship, not the children.

29:33 Time is passing, and Leah is still not loved by her husband, even though the family is growing. Simeon = One who hears. Leah believes the Lord is hearing her prayers, but still nothing is changing in her relationship with her husband.

29:34 Levi = attached. Leah is continuing to believe God for change, but she is depending on the human element to bring about the change (additional children), which is certainly the Lord's blessing, but not the key to solving the problems in the relationship.

29:35 This is her fourth child, so we are now at least four years into the marriage (probably longer), & she is still not loved. But it is at this point Leah learns to praise the Lord despite her husband's lack of love toward her. Wives/husbands must come to the point that their hope is in the Lord, not in their spouse. And when your hope is in the Lord, then God can really begin to work to change **you**, and to potentially change the heart of your spouse. This is called **faith**.

What the Lord wants to do is to change you, usually before he changes your spouse, or whoever the other person is in the strained or problem relationship.

GENESIS 30 Here we see Jacob caught between two women striving for his love and affection. More children are born, but Leah is still not being loved the way the Lord intended, see 30:19-20. Zebulon = honor.

As the story continues, we see the Lord working on Jacob, looking to teach how to live by faith, and to love, by faith.

Jacob has some character flaws **removed**; See Gen.32:22-32; Hebrews 11:21; This was a turning point in Jacob's life. From this experience he would go on to become a spiritual leader in his home. See Gen.35:1 Jacob is taken back to where he had first encountered God. He has come a long way since then. Read Gen.35:1-4, 9-10, 13-15.

Rachael has some character flaws **revealed**; Gen.31:19,35; 35:16-18

Rachael names the child by feeling and based on her circumstances (flesh, not faith). Jacob names this child BY FAITH.

Rachael was more attractive to Jacob outwardly, but had Jacob been able to look under the hood, he would have seen what at the time only God could see.

In choosing a mate for life, you've got to check under the hood.

Prov.31:30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

**Don't marry someone who does not have a firm biblical faith foundation, and/or who you have not seen growing in their faith.**

Don't be yoked together with unbelievers (II Cor.6:14-18); It is never God's will for a Christian to marry someone who is not a Christian (I Cor.7 only in the Lord).

The best way to discover God's will in marriage is to live in God's will daily.

Both Jacob and Leah grew in **faith**, and that changed everything! Jacob ends up loving Leah more than Rachael! See Gen.49:29-31.

**Learn to love your spouse (or whoever you are in a struggling relationship with) by faith.**

Practical application: Hold her hand **by faith**, buy her some flowers **by faith**, Give her a hug **by faith**, Treat her with gentleness and kindness **by faith**, take her out to dinner **by faith**, tell her you love her and are committed to her alone **by faith**...

Take him to bed (tonight) **by faith** (Three greatest needs of a married man are sex, food, and the location of the remote), prepare him a good meal **by faith**, tell him how great he is **by faith**, treat him with respect **by faith**, don't nag him, **by faith**...

## CONCLUSION

Leah is the wife who remained committed, by faith, despite her husband's lack of love toward her. Jacob is the husband who finally matured in the Lord, became a spiritual leader in his home, & learned to love by faith.

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose.

His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library. Taking a book off the shelf he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind. In the front of the book, he discovered the previous owner's name, Miss Hollis Maynell. With time and effort he located her address. She lived in New York City. He wrote her a letter introducing himself and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II. During the next year and one month the two grew to know each other through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A romance was budding.

Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like. When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting — 7:00 PM at the Grand Central Station in New York. "You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I'll be wearing on my lapel."

So at 7:00 he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved, but whose face he'd never seen. A young woman was coming toward him, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit she was like springtime come alive. He started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose. As he moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. "Going my way, sailor?" she murmured. Almost uncontrollably he made one step closer to her, and then he saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl. A woman well past 40, she had graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes.

The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. He felt as though he were being split in two, so keen was his desire to follow the girl, yet so deep was his longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned and upheld his own. And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible, her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. He did not hesitate. His fingers gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was to identify him to her. This would not be love, but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which he had been and must ever be grateful. He squared his shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the woman, even though while he spoke he felt choked by the bitterness of his disappointment. "I'm Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?"

The woman's face broadened into a tolerant smile. "I don't know what this is about, son," she answered, "but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should go and tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!"

It was a test of faith.

#### FINAL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

- Practice loving your spouse (& others) by faith

- Determine to choose your spouse by faith, and with Godly wisdom
- Spouses rate your marriage 1-10, then begin to work to move it up a notch
  - See Rev.2:4-5; The way back to your first love in marriage is to go back to your first love with the Lord. And it is not to be done based on emotion, but by faith. If we will make decisions by faith, God will in time supernaturally restore the emotion we once had with him, and with our spouse.