

FIREPROOF YOUR MARRIAGE (& Relationships) Part 3 of 4 10.5.08

The “Cleave” Principle from MATTHEW 19 = HANG TIGHT

Lesson 1: the “Gomer Principle” from Hosea = UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Lesson 2: the “Shulamite Principle” from Song of Solomon = MUTUAL POSSESSION

TODAY, Lesson 3: the “Cleave Principle” from Matthew 19 = HANG TIGHT

Interesting: the verb, to CLEAVE, has a meaning both to SEPARATE (meat cleaver, cleavage) and to CLING or ADHERE It is the only word I know of that is its own antonym!

JESUS’ TEST

In Matthew 19:3 Jesus is “tested” as to his position on DIVORCE. Be confident that you, as a follower of Jesus, will also be tested on this multi-opinionated subject. Your beliefs as well as your actions and attitudes will be tested.

Moses (who the Jews revered second to God) spoke of divorce in Deut. 24:1

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce . . .”

Notice that Moses was making a statement about the CONSEQUENCES of divorce, not so much a statement about the right or wrong of divorce. The words “no favor” and “some indecency” have given rise to a multitude of interpretations, and prompted the Pharisee’s testing of Jesus in Matthew 19.

Rabbi SHAMMAI was the one who held that “uncleanness” meant fornication alone. He therefore represented the “literal” or “legalistic” side of the argument that held that divorce was wrong (sin) in all circumstances except clear adultery on the part of the wife (or husband)

Rabbi HILLEL was the one who held that “uncleanness” meant any wrong that was found disagreeable by one partner about the other. He therefore represented the “tolerance” or “grace” side of the argument that held that divorce was allowed (not sin) whenever there were “irreconcilable differences”

The Pharisees wanted Jesus to commit to one side or the other, knowing that either commitment would find many disagreeing with his position. Jesus chooses to take the issue out of the hands of Moses and Deut. 24 and send the reasoning back to God’s position “from the beginning” in Genesis 1 and 2.

He does not teach a “commandment” but a Godly principle, laid down from the beginning of creation: God’s PERFECT WILL in the matter.

JESUS’ ANSWER

In Matthew 19:4 Jesus first refers to Genesis 1:27: *“He who created them from the beginning made them male and female.”* The emphasis here is not so much on their INDEPENDENCE as being different, but on their DEPENDENCE as being intertwined, even by name (male and “of male”)

Genesis 2:18 is informative, as to God’s position on the DEPENDENCE of the union.

1. Togetherness is “GOOD”, implying the synergy of the union
2. Each is to be a “HELPER” for the other – companion, strength, aid (PARAKLETE)
3. Each is created to be “SUITABLE” (lit: “corresponding to” or a perfect match)

We will note each of these 3 points in our application in a moment

In Matthew 19:4 Jesus quotes from Genesis 2:24: *“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”* Here again we have 3 key principles of the union of marriage:

1. LEAVE – marriage is to be a “new family” and new work of God
2. CLEAVE – marriage is to be a “new focus” on the partner (not self)
3. ONE FLESH – marriage is to be a “new creation” $1 + 1 = 1$ focused on the union (not self)

If we were to establish an NEW ORDER OF FOCUS – it would be UNION, OTHER, SELF

Jesus’ answer to his “testers” is to remove the question of DIVORCE by going back before Moses.

He emphasizes, rather, God’s perfection in the original design – what marriage “should be” at its BEST

THUS, Jesus concludes his astounding answer to the “divorce” question with a statement that most marriage ceremonies echo to this day: *“What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate”*

In this context, NO DIVORCE ALLOWED in word or even consideration.”

WHAT ABOUT MOSES?

However, much Jesus, or we, point to the focus on cleaving – the question will continue to come up – what about divorce? The Pharisees force the point in Matthew 19:7 by asking, *“Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her?”*

Note first, that despite their claim, Moses did not “command” divorce.

Secondly note: Jesus points out, correctly, in 19:8 that Moses “permitted” divorce because of “your hardness of heart” – meaning, divorce is allowed because of sin. Translation: divorce is permitted because of the sin of husbands and wives.

Thirdly note: divorce was not God’s original intention and hope for marriage.

GOD’S PERFECT WILL – cleaving for life

GOD'S PERMISSIVE WILL – divorce

Important reminder: DIVORCE IS NOT THE UNFORGIVEABLE SIN

JESUS' FINAL ANSWER

In Matthew 19:9 Jesus repeats his teaching from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:31, 32 – namely, that God's "best" (or perfect will) is divorce only in the case of adultery (fornication).

But note:

1. Matt. 5:21 No murder. God's perfect will in the matter – no anger toward another (v. 22)
2. Matt 5:27 No adultery. God's perfect will in the matter – no lustful thoughts (v.28)
3. Likewise, Matt 5:31 Divorce permitted. God's perfect will in the matter: no divorce except for sexual unfaithfulness

CLEAVE PRINCIPLES

FROM GENESIS 2:18

1. "Good" implies that we must look at our partner as God's perfect and best gift to us. To reject the partner is to reject God's gift.
2. "Helper" implies that I must be about helping my partner in every way I can – physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and more. Particularly the wife ("woman") is called to compliment the husband.
3. "Suitable" implies a perfect fit corresponding to the partner. We must constantly be in awe of how our partner compliments and completes us – thanking God for the perfect "fit"

FROM GENESIS 2:24

4. "Leave" implies a NEW FAMILY which is TOP PRIORITY and always supercedes other family demands, schedules, expectations, etc.
5. "Cleave" implies NEW FOCUS must be on TOGETHERNESS, not INDEPENDENCE
 - a) Including: vacations, meals, activities, conversation, projects, ministries and PERMANANCE w/ eyes forward and FUTURE TOGETHER
 - b) "One flesh" implies a NEW CREATION All parties (including friends and family) must support the CLEAVING of the new union – never taking the side of only the husband or wife
6. God says a married couple is "one person" – therefore
 - a. To criticize, is to criticize yourself
7. To ignore, is to ignore yourself etc.
8. To love, is to love yourself (Eph. 5)
9. Every action, reaction or words shared by one partner to the other will either move the union toward LEAVING (divorce) or CLEAVING (stronger relationship)!