



MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 19:1-9

Plug In...

This a test to trap Jesus. The Pharisees want to see if Jesus allows divorce 'for any reason'. If Jesus says no, then they will pull out Deuteronomy 24's exception. Jesus doesn't answer the question directly. He takes them to God's intention for marriage.

The Pharisees still pull out Deuteronomy 24. Essentially, they argue that even given God's primary intention for marriage to be a lifelong commitment, it is God (through Moses) that commands divorce. Jesus corrects them, it was not a 'command' but rather what was 'permitted'. Why? Because people's hearts are hard. This is an important phrase in understanding Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The state of Israel is they have hearts that don't love and care for one another. Instead, sin rules their lives. This means that despite marriages existing, the nature of people is they can destroy their partner's life through some acts – actions that go to the centre of destroying the deepest union in a marriage. God does not give a law permitting divorce thereby making people sin (God's law never promotes sin). Instead, God's law comes as grace to minimise sin, to relieve the hurt and suffering that sin causes. God's permission to divorce in the Old Testament is gracious.

Jesus continues to run with this understanding of the permission to divorce. However, Jesus speaks to the provision being abused. Jesus takes us to an example of hard-heartedness within marriage. The scenario: if a married person wants to get out of marriage in order to marry another person – if this is their intent – then that amounts to adultery. The exception (which seems to be related to the intention to leave one marriage for another) is for the innocent person. That person is the victim of their partner's adultery, and therefore does not commit adultery if they leave the marriage.

Chew It Over...

The Old and New Testaments don't give a full list of the only cases where divorce and future remarriage are right. Think through what can be said for sure:

What is God's primary will for marriage?

Even in marriages that are hard or difficult (for many reasons), what is God's will?

Consider this statement, "Marriage is the environment for discipleship". Consider what that might mean after Jesus' most recent teaching on being willing to suffer in following Him; carrying your cross; the kingdom heart of forgiveness.

If divorce is a permission to be used for gracious purposes, how is it currently abused, how can it be abused?

If asked for your wisdom on whether divorce or remarriage is appropriate, what things would you say? What things in a person's heart would you want to know?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for your marriage if applicable. If yet to be married, pray that you will honour all non-married people in a way that reflects they could be someone's wife or husband in the future. Recognising the hard-heartedness of our world, pray for anyone you know who is married.



TUESDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 19:10-12

Plug In...

The disciples are clearly shocked at Jesus' desire to see people commit to life-long marriage. They even suggest that it may be better not to marry.

Chew It Over...

Jesus doesn't answer their statement with a no or a yes, instead He gives an example of eunuchs who, because of their physical situation, most often are precluded from marriage.

What opportunity does such a life situation present for the eunuch?

Jesus says it is possible to live *like* a eunuch, even if not physically one. Jesus, all through His teaching, keeps putting the Kingdom of Heaven as the goal of life.

Think through how living for the Kingdom needs to shape your current circumstances [Cf. [1 Corinthians 7](#)]. In marriage what does that mean? In a difficult marriage, what does that mean? In a very difficult marriage what does that mean? In single life what does that mean? If single, but hoping to get married one day, what does that mean for today?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask that you will see the opportunities God gives in all situations to choose to life for Jesus and Kingdom.



WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 19:13-15

Plug In...

Despite Jesus teaching in a way that lifts children to higher status (given 1st Century culture) – chapter [18:1-5](#) – now Jesus has to say to His disciples, “Stop preventing children coming to Me!”.

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. It is the coming to “Me” that enters the children into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Chew It Over...

For sure the challenge tells us to forgo status, privilege, prestige, for they are barriers to us entering the Kingdom of Heaven. But, what about how we can be more active in ushering children towards Jesus? It appears that children are already geared to having a heart ready to receive Jesus: no wealth, no importance, not status, no power, no social ladder to climb. The tragedy is they get sucked into the lie of this world.

In [Mark 10:16](#), the same event, the praying for them and laying hands on them is called a ‘blessing’. Blessing is Jesus bestowing grace upon the child. Wow! Jesus prays for children. How can you bring children to Jesus? What does that mean beyond kids church, or driving to youth group?

What about yourself, your lifestyle, your patterns that make the pathway to Jesus difficult for your kids, for other children in your midst?

Prayer Suggestion

Jesus is praying! ([Romans 8:34](#)). Ask Jesus to pray for your kids.

Changed that as it reads like prayer not pray-er and it was a bit confusing.



THURSDAY 1 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 19:16-22

Plug In...

This guy has great wealth. He's probably learnt that money buys stuff; that everyone has a price – perhaps even God. Maybe this man doesn't quite have such a brash attitude, but it is probably likely that he thinks his wealth has come from God paying down on this man's stunning performance ethically (a common 1st century view of wealth; the converse that the poor must somehow be wicked).

Whatever is going on for him, it is clear that this man thinks he must *perform* some act, maybe some magnanimous act, to procure salvation. So he asks, what is it?

Chew It Over...

This man has missed where the Old Testament law goes. The law is to make explicit that we are stuck in sin, hard-hearted. The commands Jesus lists are all the social parts of the Ten Commandments. The list matches the catalogue of evils Jesus said spew from a person's heart ([15:19](#)).

This man suffered from what so many Pharisees of Jesus' day did. Deluding themselves that they are right with God, somehow thinking they keep the law. [Romans 3:20](#) tells us, even though the law of God is good, needs to be followed, it is introduced to make us realise the state of our hearts, and that to get eternal life we need God.

So, this man wants eternal life. Jesus ends with, "Come follow Me". Unfortunately, this is not a success story. John Calvin said of this story: "Jesus points out this man's own particular disease, as if He were touching an ulcer with His finger."

Prayer Suggestion

Despite our wealth or lack, despite our morality or lack, may we daily drive to Jesus for eternal life.



FRIDAY 2 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 19:23-26

Plug In...

This comical picture lands with the punchline: getting into heaven is impossible for a human.

Chew It Over...

Jesus goes on, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible!"

Why is this impossible for humans? Jesus says God will find a way.

Because of Jesus' solution, new hearts exist. We are no longer ruled by hard-hearts (we've entered the Kingdom). What should someone with a Kingdom-heart look like according to the scenarios in this chapter? (Think in marriage, with regard to children, with money, with social behaviours towards others.)

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for our new heart. Thank God for the impossible. Ask that God's Kingdom rule of our hearts continues to reign over every part of our life, wealth, actions, relationships.



WEEKEND 3-4 MARCH 2018

SERIES: The Gospel of Matthew

Read: Matthew 19:27-30

Plug In...

Peter says to Jesus he's a little concerned what this might all mean for him and the crew. They've made some big sacrifices in the name of following Jesus, seeking the Kingdom. Jesus says they will inherit eternal life and in abundance.

Jesus refers them to [Daniel 7](#). There the picture is that the Son of Man will inherit and rule over the Kingdom. The Son of Man invites all those who suffered because of seeking the Kingdom to share in the ruling.

Chew It Over...

The Gospel narratives are meant to shift us from living in one story to living in another. We all share a story in our culture about what is a human, what is our destiny. The Gospels show us that our story is wrong and whatever we think we'll get at the end, it will actually be a dead-end.

The ability to make these radical life decisions to follow Jesus (e.g. staying in a hard marriage; forgoing wealth; enduring suffering; coping rejection from family) all comes from what narrative we believe. If we don't believe that Jesus has actually secured eternal life for us before God the judge, we won't make these decisions.

Prayer Suggestion

Boldly ask that God will wrest you and shake you up. May it not be that you don't get that this world is a dead-end and its time is up. Ask that you vividly live out the story of

one of the suffering ones who follow the Son of Man, being resurrected and installed to rule the inheritance of the new heavens and earth.