

Brad Pitt has been a well-known actor & producer in Hollywood for many years. He grew up in rural Missouri in a conservative home with a Southern Baptist background, but when he left for the University of Missouri and then Hollywood, he left those frameworks of belief behind.

He dated numerous actresses during those early years and then married Jennifer Aniston in 2000. To many they appeared to be the ideal couple, but in 2005, they separated and divorced.

That same year Brad Pitt starred in a movie w/ Angelina Jolie and they became the new power couple in Hollywood. Seven years [and a number of kids later] they were engaged in 2012, married in 2014, but in 2016 Angelina Jolie filed for divorce citing “**irreconcilable differences.**”

And the reason I give you those messy details is to get to a quote from Brad Pitt following his divorce from Jennifer Aniston –

“I don’t think we’re meant to be with just one person”

Today we’re going to look at the difficult subject of divorce as we come to Mark, ch. 10. It’s difficult because it’s typically painful. A painful breaking of promises & hearts. I’ve yet to hear someone say, **“that was fun, can’t wait to go thru that again”** No, overall divorce is yucky.... [which is a technical term for “bad”]

Well, let’s see how Jesus deals w/ this topic. And you’ll notice that he doesn’t initiate the conversation in Mk. 10 – the Pharisees do. **Why?** Because they want to test him.. [which is code for wanting to **trap** Him].... [Look at Mk. 10, vv. 1-2]

Now how could this subject get Jesus in trouble? Well, let’s begin with a little background..... There were 2 schools of

thought on divorce in Judaism at this time. Get Jesus to take a side and you can manipulate that and reduce His popularity -

The **Shammai** position in Rabbinic Judaism was restrictive - a man could only divorce his wife for a serious transgression – like adultery.

The **Hillel** position was much more permissive – burning a meal or even finding another woman fairer than your wife was reason enough to divorce. And it was this easier view of divorce that was most popular in the time of Jesus. So if Jesus was not for “*easy divorce*” he would, right away, be in the minority – marginalized, vulnerable to criticism.

The 2nd trap was the incident that occurred w/ John the Baptist and Herod in back in ch. 6. John the Baptist criticized Herod for taking his brother’s wife, Herodias. So it’s easy to imagine the Pharisees thinking that if Jesus took the same stand John the Baptist did against Herod & Herodias, maybe Jesus would be arrested and beheaded like John was. **Mission Accomplished**

How then did Jesus navigate this minefield? Avoidance? No.

He takes them head on and goes right to the Scriptures.....

First of all - **Jesus points them to Moses.... [READ vv. 3 & 4]**

So Jesus points the Pharisees to Scripture... more specifically, the law of Moses, more specifically --- **Deut. 24:1-4 [read]**

The main point is that a man can’t bring back his divorced wife if she remarries another man – that’s an abomination in God’s eyes and shows the stupidity of the divorce in the first place.

It’s as if Moses is saying to Jewish husbands, you better think twice before you do this, because if you do you will have to give her a certificate of divorce that sets her free, you can’t take her

back if she remarries, and you may have to pay back her dowry.
[Lutzer quote - 2 things ought not to be entered into prematurely – embalming and divorce]

At any rate, Moses wasn't encouraging divorce or putting his stamp of approval on it, only stating what was unlawful if a man divorces his wife. He was dealing w/ the realities of fallen, stiff-necked people.

The key issue for debate in Judaism was in **Dt. 24:1** “**if he finds something indecent about her**” – this raised the question of the grounds for divorce- **Something as small as bad cooking or bad breath? or something more substantial... something shameful?**

Inquiring minds want to know

But notice how Jesus doesn't respond in **Mark 10** w/ a restrictive or non-restrictive view of divorce. No, he begins by getting to the heart of divorce, what really causes it? [**look at Mark 10, v. 5**][read]

The key word in Grk combines *sclerosis kardia* [**hardness of heart**]
Which reminds us of what Jesus says about the heart back in **Mark 7:20-23** [read]

I was talking to our mayor, Dale Berman, a few weeks ago and he told me that 90% of North Aurora police calls are in response to domestic issues. Broken relationships. Broken marriages. Broken homes.

And what lies at the heart of this?

Jesus says, “***it's the hardness of the human heart – sin within***”

Is your marriage struggling? Or someone else's? Surely ***hard-heartedness*** in some form or fashion lies at the root of the problem [*in one, and often, both persons in the marriage*].

And so a very important thing to do is look in the mirror and honestly ask yourself – **is there a sinful hardness inside of me?**

a calcified displeasure with my spouse? Is my heart frozen with unforgiveness? or Is it cemented w/ selfishness of some kind?

If that's the case [you may not be a Christian, but if you are].... You need to own it - Even if it's very ugly... own it and then confess it – **If we confess our sins He is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & cleanse us from all unrighteousness 1Jn1:9**

Get right with God. And then ask Him to soften your heart so that you can get right with your spouse.

Ask Him to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh that sees your spouse thru the eyes of Christ.

I saw God do this with a man who came into my office at Scott AFB 2 years ago. His marriage was ice cold and headed for divorce, but by God's grace Chris became a Christian and his heart was softened. Just talked with him recently, still married and doing well. But in these matters of marriage & divorce, the condition of the heart is central and your relationship with Jesus is absolutely vital.

Alright, let's move to Jesus' next point in today's passage - **Jesus points the Pharisees [and all who are listening] to God's original intention for marriage. [vv. 6-9] [read]**

Notice that Jesus goes back to the beginning, back to creation when God made man and woman in His image. God created them male & female –distinct & different. Equally human, but two genders – distinct, different [Mars & Venus], but both
made in the image of God.

Unfortunately, we live in a nation that now defines marriage in a different way, but God's law and God's design from the beginning was one man and one woman. And we see this in Genesis 2 – which Jesus quotes here in Mk. 10...

⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,
⁸ and they shall become one flesh.'

Jesus then adds, “*So they are no longer two but one flesh.*”

Here Jesus talks about God’s design for marriage – the man leaving home, holding fast to his wife, becoming one flesh. That’s the mathematics of marriage. Two become one!

It’s a physical reality, but **oneness/unity** is also a relational, emotional, and spiritual reality.

And in Mark, ch. 10, I think Mark continues to show Jesus teaching on discipleship and funnels it right into Jesus’ teaching on the unity of marriage...

Just before today’s passage Jesus says, “*Everyone will be salted with fire*” in **ch. 9, v. 49**. Which can have the idea of purification or fiery trials. But the combination of salt & fire also call to mind the burnt sacrifices in the OT [which included salt!].

So when Jesus says, “*Salt is good*” in **v. 50**, I think He is saying to His followers that it is good to live salty, sacrificial lives that follow Jesus wholeheartedly. Lives that fight hard against sin, lives that seek to serve others. And the result is peace...

v. 50 “Have salt in yourselves and be at peace w/ each other”

And what comes next? This passage on marriage where Jesus points to the oneness “the peace” that God designed for marriage

So what is one of the keys to peace in marriage?

Focusing on all the things the other person does that annoy you?

No, serving that person. Showing love in tangible & sacrificial ways. Doing something that pleases the other person whether they deserve it or not.

I didn’t deserve the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross to

pay for my sins, but He did it... despite my many offenses.

Amazing Love, O what sacrifice, the Son of God given for me, my debt he paid and my death he died, that I might live, that I might live.

Get 2 people sacrificing for each other in a marriage and it breathes life into that marriage. [Eph. 5:25] [Priscilla]

O God, give us soft, salty, sacrificial hearts.

So if your marriage has lost some saltiness & peace. Ask God to help you sacrificially love your spouse. And He will!

But why go to such lengths for oneness & peace in marriage?

Because you are a follower of King Jesus! And King Jesus points you to God's intention for marriage – unity, intimacy.

And one more thing – **permanence!**

Look at what Jesus says in v. 9 [SLIDE]

We see in this verse that God is not some kind of neutral observer. He created marriage/He designed it/He forged it. He joined Adam & Eve together and His *fingerprints* continue to be on the institution of marriage in some sense.

So what's at stake if someone separates what God has joined?

#1 disobedience to the teaching of Christ about God's intention for marriage

#2 divorce can lead you into the sin of adultery

[Look down at vv. 10-12][read]

This is another reason not to sever a marriage [and yes I know that there are all kinds of complexities] – abuse, abandonment, adultery, etc.. And those are important issues & raise important questions

But Jesus doesn't deal with those details here and so I want to stay on track with His point about permanent oneness.

So **#3** **What's at stake if you separate what God has joined together?**

Answer: *the reflection of God's image!* God's intention is that marriage be a lifelong commitment that reflects the essence and nature of God Himself. Because, you see, God is one!

In today's passage, Jesus quotes from the context of creation -

He starts in **Gen. 1, v. 27**, but let me quote the context starting in **v. 26....** God said, "**Let us make man in our image**"

That's a provocative plural!!!...

v. 27 "So God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him, *male and female* he created them."

More plurals. And we come to see in Scripture that God exists in 3 persons – perfectly, eternally, united. Father, Son & H.S. **Dt. 6:4** says "**the Lord is one**" Jesus said, "**I and the Father are one**" So I think that God created marriage to be a reflection of the unity & faithfulness & peace & permanence of love expressed among the persons of the Godhead for eternity.

Oneness, not division, forever. And for us – **till death do us part**

My wife and I have a breakfast date on Monday mornings and we've been doing a devotional by Dennis & Barbara Rainey [well-known for their family radio program]. The last one surprised us – the Rainey's were on a trip, just the 2 of them. So Dennis lights some candles in the room and tries to set the mood for a romantic evening. But Barbara had some things she needed to talk about – it had been a hard year for them.

How did they resolve their differences? They had a fight!

Dennis even threw something and broke a window—Barbara began to cry But then he did something that became a milestone in their marriage. He cupped her face in his hands and said, "I want you to know that I love you and am committed to you. I will love you for the rest of your life, even if we never make love again."

But in all seriousness, in that moment and in the moments since, Dennis Rainey is reflecting the image of God in his marriage.

Unconditional Love. Unwavering Commitment. Permanent Oneness. Basically, “I’m not going anywhere” That’s distinctive discipleship in marriage, especially in our society. And it’s grounded in God’s design & God’s will & God’s nature & God’s promises to us are....

I will never leave you nor forsake you.... Deut. 31 & Heb. 13

Jesus said, “Lo I am with you always to the end of the age” Mt. 28

“Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” Rom. 8

And Christ Jesus our Lord died to bring us into union with Himself. The bible says that we [the church] are His bride! And so God tells us over and over again in His word –

“I love you, I’m with you, and I’ll never leave you”

So there is a lot at stake in Mark 10 for Christians who are married and those who will get married and for those who are divorced and for those who are single, but want to hold up marriage instituted by God . And let’s be honest, we’re all frail, we are struggle, so God help us in to have His heart for this grand endeavor called marriage. Amen.