



Red Letter City
“Divorce”
May 22, 2016
Courage Church, Detroit, MI.

Today’s Topic is divorce.

Most of you probably thought, maybe we were going to skip this one, or perhaps by now you know better. If it is in the bible, we are going to teach it if we have the opportunity to do so. We try to not shy away from the difficult topics...

we pray about them.
we prepare for them.
and we face them head on.

and that is a pattern we plan to continue of as long as we have the honor of doing this, **ESPECIALLY** when it is an area which statistics say has affected at least half of this room in the most personal ways.

I know that this seems like a very specific message for a very specific audience. It is less broad than the majority of this series is, that is true... and for People who are in this place today and you are not even married yet... Please hear this... **MOST OF YOU WILL BE.** Please do not tune me out today. and according to the stats, no matter what your marital status is, the odds are this topic still hits home in one way or another.

Some of you, still after 15-20 years are living a little bit begrudgingly toward your parents because you grew up in such a tense home environment, and it culminated in divorce. and it has caused trust issues for you even to this day.

Others have watched friends go through it and have had no idea how to help them, or what to say to them.

and others have walked through it yourself. Personally.

and once again, just like last week, I want to say this from the beginning... the gospel of Jesus Christ is not about condemnation. It isn't.

It is not about pointing out what you did wrong, or what I did wrong...

the sermon on the mount is not about condemnation. It is more about about navigation.

It is about the hard question, "How do I navigate through the things in my life that are unmanageable?"

It is about navigating life as a community during the times when it feels unmanageable.

Because the reality is, life is not manageable. It isn't. We have been taught our whole lives that it is... that we are all we need... and that if we just put our minds to anything, we can do it. But then sometime in life hits us that cripples us, and suddenly we need someone else to carry us for a while.

and as a church... as a body, we have made one of our foundational verses 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come... we have been given the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them."

We have to keep that at the forefront of everything we talk about. Grace must overcome everything else.

I am inadequate to speak on this subject. This is a very heavy subject, and I am going to do my very best to show you culturally what was going on in hopes that it will bring some clarity to you as to what Jesus was saying.

So... as with the rest of the series, lets begin with our text that Jesus brings to us in the sermon on the mount, found in Matthew 5:27-32. The first 4 verses we read last week, and we are going to read them again before

moving on, because what we are exploring today is truly a continuation of everything we studied last week.

Lust

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that **everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Divorce

³¹ “It was also said, ‘**Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.**’ But I say to you that **everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**

Lets Pray.

Welcome to one of the greatest debated discussions of Jesus’ day. Now, First of all, you may wonder, why did we read the section on lust again? We did a whole sermon on that, last week...

well, consider this part two.

This was a continuation of what Jesus was saying...

The whole thing is one lump section. When you read the sermon on the mount, you have to read it as an entire sermon, not just a bunch of tiny snippets that we break into parts so that they can stand alone. That was a reason that I struggled with the concept of even doing a series on this sermon, because in all reality, it is just one sermon. But there are just so many questions that arise from what Jesus says, here, and now, mainly because we don’t live in Jesus’ day. We don’t understand the way that things were, culturally, in Jesus’ day.

We read an English version, of a Greek written new testament, quoting a Hebrew raised man who a lot of the time is speaking Aramaic.

There is a LOT to study.

Now, in order to fully understand what Jesus is saying here, in the sermon on the mount, about divorce, we need to look at what he says in Matthew 19. Because in Matthew 19 the Pharisees ask Jesus a very telling question that gives us a window into their hearts. Now remember, Jesus' in the sermon on the mount introduces us to the "Spirit of the law." He introduces us to this big idea that not only do our thoughts matter, but also, that our motives matter. It is all about the heart. So lets look at Matthew 19:1-9 -

Teaching About Divorce

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and **hold fast** to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "**Because of your hardness of heart** Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, *and* marries another, commits adultery."

Why would these Pharisees want to know about divorce?

Because they wanted to get divorced. because their eye had hooked on someone else, and they wanted to know, "Rabbi Jesus, can we divorce for any reason?"

But remember, God judges the secrets of men... and Jesus, He knows their hearts. He knows their intent. He knows what they are looking to do. So before answering their question, first he reminds them about marriage. He reminds them about what they got themselves into when they said "I do."

So Jesus does something incredible. He takes them on a journey all the way back to Genesis. He takes them to a time way *before* the law, and then he takes them *to* the law, and then he takes them *to the spirit of the law*.

So what does he do first?

verse 4-6:

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and **hold fast** to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, **let not man separate**."

I was reading a little document... I guess you would call it an essay, that G.K. Chesterton wrote called "Divorce vs. Democracy" and one of the first things he said in this thing really stuck out to me. He said (talking about divorce):

"It may be summarised as the patriotism of the household. In the experience of nationality we do not admit that any excess of despair can come into the same logical world as desertion. No amount of tragedy need amount to treason."

Life gets very hard. Circumstances change all of the time. and especially today, in our world where it is considered totally "normal" to walk away from a marriage... if we aren't constantly reminding ourselves what it is that we actually are a part of, then we are going to grow numb to it and very easily could let it go entirely.

Now, Chesterton's quote is a bold and clear statement, that if nothing else, definitely seems to reflect the heart of Jesus in the way that he put an enormous *emphasis* on the institution of marriage... because before you can understand divorce, you have to understand marriage.

It was one of God's biggest ideas.

What does Jesus do here in Matthew 19? He goes all the way back to the beginning. To the first thing ever written about marriage, in Genesis. He is showing us, first of all, that marriage predates the law. It's been around as long as the world has. He quotes Genesis 2:24.

In Genesis, when God is creating everything... what does he say?

It is good. He creates the light, and he saw that the light was good. He saw the dry land, and what did he say? It's good.

He created the sea, and it was good.

Everything revolved around this idea, that God looked at everything that he created, and behold, "It was very good" (Gen. 1:31)

But suddenly in Genesis 2:18 that all of that for a moment is put on pause... Because God sees something, that is not good.

He sees man, and he is all alone. and God says, "that's not good."

Something is missing.

and so he creates woman from the rib of man, and God says that the two shall become one flesh.

There is something incredibly special about a marriage between a man and a woman... we have talked in depth in previous messages about how it is the clearest reflection we have, of what God is really like.

Then, Jesus says "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and **hold fast** to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

I want you to look at what it says here... "hold fast." A lot of translations say "cleave to."

it is the Greek word *proskollaō* (pros-kol-lä'-ō) and it means to be glued to.

Which of course is a kind of fun visual of being married... and of course, Jesus is quoting Genesis 2:24 which is a Hebrew word... and essentially what it is talking about is a covenant. An agreement. It means two people come together, and agree together on the terms of their marriage. They both agree, life no longer is about me, now my life is about you... now *our life*, is about us. You have to throw all the selfish stuff out the window when you get married. you just do... so together they agree, "this is the way that things are going to be *for us*." So two different people come together, and form *one* new life.

This is how marriage worked in Jesus' day.

There was a marriage contract called a Ketubah. and it was long.

You know how people when they get married, they have a time when they give their vows?

It is kind of like that, only way longer.

But think about a wedding vow... sometimes the bride and groom write their own vows and depending on their understanding of marriage going into it, a lot of the time they are just these attempts at poetry about how much they love the other person and can't wait to spend the rest of their life with them...

but what a vow is supposed to be is a promise that when this "incredible high" we are feeling up here at the altar in front of all of our friends... when this finally wears off, I will still be there. If you get sick, I will still be there. If you lose your mind, I will still be there. I will take care of you.

I will keep the tone that is in my voice now, when I am fully in love with you, and I will maintain it to the best of my ability even on the days that I am struggling to love you, later.

Vows remind us that emotional highs can be amazing, but they won't sustain a life... they won't pay the bills and they won't raise the kids.

When you get married, you promise that you will show the same tenderness, when you have to work to love the other person, that you show when its easy. You show the same affection.

You keep a marriage going through work, not through feeling... and when it feels like its not working, you work harder.

A marriage is a covenant.

and that is what a Ketubah was. It was a written agreement between the two adjoining families and it was not all lovey-dovey.

It laid out some very specific terms that both sides agreed upon.

So Jesus says, yes there is an agreement, but even beyond the agreement, there is also something else. This is bigger than a piece of paper you signed your name onto.

This was something that God, by his own hand, crafted. He created marriage... because of everything that he had created, all of it was good, except for the fact that man was all alone. And so God gave man, woman, and the two joined together in what is our most beautiful reflection here on earth, of what God is like. Of the way that God relates as a triune being who is God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

He says:

“What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

So Jesus tells the Pharisees here... no. You can't divorce for any reason.

So then they ask him:

“Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” He said to them, “**Because of your hardness of heart** Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the *beginning* it was not so.

Remember, in the beginning, there was no sin.
and this is where it starts to get interesting.

Because now we get into the law, put in place because there is sin. And the law, really only says one thing about divorce, and it is found here, in Deuteronomy 24. In fact, the entire divorce debate in that day essentially revolved around this passage. and it says this (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, ² and if she goes and becomes another man’s wife, ³ and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, ⁴ then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.”

So the law said that if you find indecency in your wife... you could divorce her. Now, first you have to understand this culture... this was a time when women didn’t have any rights. And suddenly this law comes in play, that to us may sound awful but really what it was, was a law to protect women.

Because what it said was that if a man so choses to abandon his wife... WHICH PEOPLE WERE DOING, anyway... but this law said that if that happened, she is not bound to him anymore. She is not a slave. She is free to go and to remarry. And the law said that if she does end up remarrying, then you are not allowed to get her back.

Once she finds someone else, you can’t change your mind.

It actually protected women. And obviously since then we have come a long way on the issue of women’s rights, but in that day, this was a huge step.

This why Jesus said that Moses issued these certificates BECAUSE of your hardness of hearts...

Because marriage had already been established as something instituted by God. The two become one, and there was no reason for people to separate what God has joined.

But because of the fall of man, and because sin entered into the world, people started making bad decisions... they started wanting *different* things. and people in their marriages were growing numb not only to their love for the other person but also to the covenant that was between them, and the men were leaving the women all alone and with nothing. And so then this law in Deuteronomy comes into play, and says, IF you make that decision... IF you leave your wife... you better really think it through because if you leave, she is free to remarry. And if she remarries, you can never have her back.

So fast forward to Jesus' day...

The issue at hand, that was being argued, was, what is indecency? The Hebrew phrase is *ervat dabar* - the literal is to find an "indecency of a thing."

What justifies a person leaving his wife?

At what point can I do this... and feel okay about it.

Because here we have a group of people, who were married, and they didn't like *their wives* as much as they liked other girls. So they wanted to know, can I issue my wife a certificate of divorce, and then go marry someone else.

In that day, there were two schools of thought that dominated their culture... Two Rabbi's who lived just before Jesus' ministry, and they each had two very different yokes. Two very different interpretations of the scriptures, and a lot of the debates in that day, which Jesus was essentially throwing himself into the middle of, in the sermon on the mount... basically were asking this question...

which yoke is it?

Is it Hillel?

Or is it Shammai?

Hillel was always the more liberal one... the burden was extremely light, his yoke was incredibly easy, and normally erred on the side of peoples welfare. He was immensely popular, and was at one point the president of the Sanhedrin (which was like the Jewish Supreme Court).

The other well known Rabbi was Shammai, who tended to be much more conservative... more strict in his interpretation.

So the people would read this verse in Deuteronomy... and they would consider the Ketubahs that they signed their name on...

And what people wanted to know is: what gets me out? Because only a rabbi had the authority to get you out of your marriage, so the question is, "on what grounds will you give me a certificate of divorce?"

And Hillel's yoke essentially said: indecency is indecency. If she spoils a dish that she is preparing, you can leave. If she burns your toast, and you want out, I will sign your certificate of divorce. Basically his interpretation says, "if you want out, just get out. I will give you a certificate of divorce."

it was very lax.

But Shammai held a much more strict interpretation. He said, essentially, "no, we can't do that to women, you can't throw them out because of burnt toast or because of a bad day... you can only divorce your wife if there is marital unfaithfulness."

So the people in that day knew what these two rabbi's thought, and they wanted to know, what does Jesus say?

and in most of the cases of "Hillel vs. Shammai", Jesus' yoke on the subjects was closer to or sided with Hillel.

Except in this debate. In the question of divorce, Jesus sided with Shammai.

He said no, you can't get divorced simply because she burns your toast or has a bad day. The only acceptable grounds are if there is marital unfaithfulness.

But he says it by leading us on this journey, reminding us what it all means in the first place.

Jesus is saying, DO NOT BE QUICK to step into divorce because you are literally separating something that God brought together.

Because the truth about marriage is, two people bring a whole life's worth of memories, and baggage, and accomplishments, and disappointments together... and they join together, and they determine, from now on, its not you.

Its us.

You are not alone anymore.

And then they begin to build a new life together from the broken pieces that they are both bringing to the table. And suddenly you get five, ten, fifteen years down the road into this thing and you realize that marriage didn't save you... you still have all of these unanswered questions, you still have these fragmented pieces of your life... and now all of your garbage and all of their garbage comes together and there is tension and because they don't work out their issues, instead they grow numb to them. They get used to things being broken, in themselves, and they don't work to change themselves, and because they won't change themselves they are never going to change their marriage. So they begin to look at what it would take to start a marriage with someone else. A way to start over.

Their hearts are hard.

So Moses stepped in with this law and said that just because your hearts are hard, you can not just dump someone on their own... just because you have grown bitter toward them because *you* haven't kept *your* end of the agreement, doesn't mean you can leave them in such a vulnerable place... you have to free them from their contractual agreement. If you so choose this, you are releasing them, and if there is remarriage, you can never get them back because the reality is that the problems that you carried into the last marriage are likely going to follow you both into your next marriages.

and Jesus ends by saying this:

And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, *and* marries another, commits adultery.”

and this is where it all just falls apart for most christians. This is where grace just seems to get cut off at the source. Suddenly, they read this, and divorce becomes the unforgivable sin.

And any person who has done it for *any* reason other than adultery, no matter how long ago, and no matter how repentant, and no matter what the circumstances were... is bound to a life all alone, or a life of sin.

Do we really believe that that is what Jesus taught? Is that consistent *at all*, with the rest of the things that he taught in the sermon on the mount or anywhere else? Is that consistent *at all* with the way that he treated people, and met them in their broken situations, and loved them where they were, and went after people? Is that consistent *at all* with the way he treated the woman at the well who had been married and divorced 5 times already? Or even the more, extreme case of the woman who was caught in adultery?

Is there more grace for adultery, than there is for divorce?

Do you think that it is not hard enough already, for someone who has spent such a huge chunk of their life building something that they thought would last forever... that they **KNOW WAS SUPPOSED TO LAST FOREVER...** only to watch it fall apart... only to grasp and grasp and desperately try and grasp even harder and yet feel it slipping from your grip.

Dawn and I are very close to a young lady who married young, her husband and her had children together, and then, after several years, things really fell apart. And just like everything, there are two sides to every story... two sides to every hurt, and we only know one.

But from the side we saw, which not everyone saw... from what we were able to see, she didn't really have much of a choice.

There was violence. There was crime. There was addiction. There was crime to feed an addiction. There were really scary moments for really small children... but as far as everyone knows, there was no adultery.

But there was hell. There was a breach in the Ketubah.

And there was grace, but then there was another breach. and another. and before long, there was a separation.

and we watched this girl, as she went to church and people came up to her and asked her where her husband was, and she just shrugged it off...

and we watched this girl, as word began to get out that they weren't together anymore, be bombarded with questions that she did not answer... She explained to no-one what happened, because it wasn't anyone else's business. So as far as everyone else was concerned, they just broke up.

Instead of throwing him under the bus for everything that he had done, she let herself shoulder an equal amount of the blame by letting it remain a mystery to people.

and suddenly there is shame that is thrust over the head of a young woman who literally went through more hell in a two year period than anyone I have ever seen... and the church and our goofy, sometimes graceless takes on the bible only made it harder for her because we placed a heavy burden on her and didn't lift a finger to ease the burden.

but eventually she stopped showing up to the church because she didn't want to shoulder any more blame. and any more questions.

I remember being shocked sitting in the same soon as people criticized her when she began even talking about dating again.

and I am just sitting there thinking, "Forever?"

Your sins, though they were scarlet, have been washed white as snow... but not this?

She has to be alone, forever now? She has to raise her children ALONE, forever?

You are telling me that she would be better off a widow, because then she at least could move on... but now she has to be stuck the rest of her life? That is the opposite of even the way that the treated people in Moses day... when women barely had any rights.

We cast so much judgment and we don't understand that most people do not want to get divorced. They want their lives to work out the way they dream about. And they built and they built and they built this life and when they could not hold it together and their whole world crumbled, not only did they have the weight of their own guilt but they also had the weight of our condemnation on their lives.

Think about Isaiah 1:8... Come now, and let us *reason* together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

What does it mean to reason? Reason is how we form judgments by a process of logic.

Can we think this through? Are some of the sins washed white as snow, and some of them not. Do some of them hang around?

At any point do we move on?

and this is what Jesus says here. Now remember... we are reading an English translation of a Greek written New Testament, about a man of Hebrew descent who often spoke in Aramaic.

So he says “whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, *and* marries another, commits adultery.”

The last sentence, the word “and” is incredibly telling... “and” is one translation, it is accurate... but if you bring it back to Hebrew the word becomes much more flexible. It still could say “and” - but it may not have been.

In English the word means “and” or “also,” but in Hebrew, which the Torah was written, the word means “and” or “in order to” or “so that.” It is the same word that Moses uses when he says “Let my people go, so that they can worship me”

and suddenly you have a literal translation that just as accurately, but much more sensibly says:

whoever divorces his wife, in order to marry another, commits adultery.

Suddenly, it becomes a heart issue, once again.

You can read it as “and” and you can live your life judging people, and condemning them for their decisions, and tell them that they are living in sin every time they come together with their husband or wife because of a mistake marriage that they entered into 15 years before when they were 18 years old, that only lasted 8 months before their husband took off without a word...

Or you can read it with grace, and realize that this fits perfectly into the sermon on the mount because it is not about people living in a sin that they can never stop committing because of one mistake, but in all actuality it is Jesus bringing the whole thing back to the heart of his hearer.

Why do you want to get divorced in the first place? Is it because you have tried every single thing known to man to hold it together and it just keeps falling apart? Is it because you have gone to counseling for years and every session he leaves screaming, refusing to change, throwing chairs against the wall, putting all the blame on you.

Is it Because every time you get home, you burn the toast, and he gets violent and he heats the toaster up again, and he throws it at you.

And you are seeing that same anger begin to harvest in your children.

and they aren't safe. and you aren't safe. and its becoming, of all of you.

Is it because he is addicted to gambling... and has spent your life's savings, and all the money you make from the three jobs that should go to buy groceries... and you have to have a second bank account to put the money from that third job into it, that he doesn't know about, just so he doesn't touch it... just so that you can feed the kids.

I will tell you this... if that were my daughter, I wouldn't sit back and tell her to endure the beatings, and the bankruptcy, and the moral bankruptcy...

Sometimes people give up their own rights.

Sometimes people give up their own families...

When they attack that which they have promised to protect.

and that doesn't mean that the grace of God can't still find them... because God's grace show's no partiality... but he loves his children even more than he loves his laws.

and if you find yourself in a relationship that has no boundaries, and there is limit to the places that the other person may go, you are living in hell and you need to seek help for your marriage and your family.

Divorce has to be the LAST CASE scenario... the worst case scenario... but sometimes people find themselves in the worst case. But MOST of the time, it does not need to come to this.

and as a body, as the church, who understands that we are all human, our job, as we do our best to mediate these types of situations, is we have to ask ourselves "Has everything been done that could be done?" in most cases, the answer is no. In some cases, the answer is yes.

The only other grounds that the bible gives for divorce, is Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, and those grounds are abandonment.

There are circumstances where the other person has already abandoned you.

Is it because of that?

or, Is it because of lust?

Is it because you just aren't content with what you have, and you want something else? And you aren't willing to work on what you have, so instead you think it is going to be better somewhere else?

Most people who want to get divorced, they find that the person is not the same person that they married ten years ago. So they feel tricked... but I have news for you... you aren't either.

Life changes people. Kids change people. Money changes people. I am not saying that it should, but it does.

And its time that you both start working toward each other's love again instead of looking for where you can find it some place else.

That was the problem in that day. It was the 10th commandment they were breaking, while trying to get around breaking the 7th.

And when you understand it that way, you have a much more clear understanding as to what Jesus was saying in the sermon on the mount. The entire passage was about lust. He begins by talking about the lust of the heart... and how if they burn with lust for another, they have already committed adultery in their heart... it is iniquity and it is sin.

and he goes on to say that, even if you get a certificate of divorce first... if while you were married your eye hooked to someone else, you already committed adultery with her in your mind, and then you go and get your certificate of divorce so that you can marry her...

don't think that you are in the clear. You have committed adultery.

And don't think that the next one is going to be any different, because you are entering it...

But the problem that most of us love to forget is that "wherever you go, there you are." and the same set of problems that you brought into one, you are probably going to bring into the next.

The Samaritan woman at the well brought the same baggage into 5 marriages and every one of them had the same result. Because she was the constant in all five. Jesus did not tell her to go and not marry the sixth one... he told her that he will give her living water that she can actually be satisfied in, whether she is married, or not.

Because if you are looking for marriage to satisfy you, it won't. If you are looking for anything in this world to satisfy you... It won't.

Only Jesus can do that. and you will never have a healthy marriage until you have a healthy satisfaction in the love of Christ. Christ is ultimately our groom, and the church is the bride of Christ, and until we can live satisfied in him we will never be satisfied in anything else.

I want to close with this.

In a minute, I want to talk to people who are married...

First, I want to talk to people who have been divorced, and to people who, if they are honest with themselves, have held divorce against people.

So to the people who have been divorced, or are having a hard time forgiving someone, or trusting someone, or believing in someone who has previously gone through one...Honestly there was a point in my life when I probably did that too... not only because of what Jesus said, but also because of what the old testament says, in the book of Malachi.

It says "God hates divorce."

and that seems pretty cut and dry... it seems pretty obvious...

except, it's not.

Even something so clear, could mean so many things.

Last fall we did a series on the ten commandments. and we talked about how, if you read the language carefully, you realize that the ten commandments were a marriage ketubah between God and Israel. It was the terms of their marriage, laid out clearly. In this marriage, you can have no other Gods before me... in this marriage, we don't do *these* things, and we DO do things things...

if you are unfamiliar with that concept please go back and watch that series online.

now... Several times throughout the old testament, and this only further shows the way that God viewed Israel, as someone he was in a marriage with... but several times it says that Israel had been unfaithful. In fact, God goes to some incredible lengths to make sure that we know just how bad their relationship got.

If you read Hosea, for instance... without understanding the relationship between God and Israel, it can be a pretty confusing book. Because God has this man Hosea, who is a prophet, and basically he tells Hosea that he first needs to marry a woman of whoredom... a woman who, it was essentially guaranteed she would be unfaithful...

and that sounds really screwed up, but you have to understand that a prophet was one of the highest religious posts a person could hold... they were the ones who, in the old testament, literally spoke for God.

But before Hosea could speak for God, first he had to understand what God went through.

It was a lot of pain.

and so Hosea endured A LOT of pain in his marriage, just so that would be able to appropriately speak for God... because of everything that he now understood about God... because of his wife's continuous unfaithfulness... and how much it hurt.

The bible makes it clear, Israel broke the Ketubah. Again, and again.

and in fact, in a few different spots, the bible actually says that God had to divorce Israel. In fact, it says he actually gave them a certificate of divorce.

in the book of Jeremiah, it begins talking about just how faithless Israel was... and says in chapter 3verse 8 "She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a certificate of divorce."

Is there even a possibility, that when God says "I hate divorce" it has less to do with the fact that he hates the people who do it, or even the ones who are responsible for it... or who have gone through it... and instead it actually means what it says...

He hates divorce.

Because he knows first hand, all about it. He knows how it feels.

Because he went through it.

Because it was one of the hardest things that He has ever had to go through.

No decision in life could possibly be filled with more disappointment. In Malachi, right before God says that he hates divorce, he says that the way the relationship went, the unfaithfulness, the broken covenant... it says that "floods the altar with tears."

Nobody comes out of it without a deep wounded scar. There is pain for everyone involved, every time.

Guys, I hate divorce. Because I have watched what it has done to my friends. I don't know anybody who would say that they *like* it.

But according to Hebrews, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness... (Hebrews 4:15) He gets it. He gets it

better than anyone, because as we know in this case, he walked through it himself.

and yet, He is a God who wants to give us beauty for ashes (Isaiah 61).

King David just about broke all of the commandments in order to have Bathsheba... who was married.

and yet God created in him a clean heart... called him a man after God's *own* heart, and allowed Jesus to come through his seed, through the woman that he married AFTER committing adultery with.

He blatantly did everything that Jesus says not to do, and still found himself in the center of the grace of God, because he brought it to God broken.

He knew every bit of pain and destruction he had caused. He knew he destroyed oneness. He knew he destroyed echad.

God restores people. Even the ones who divorce in order to marry another.

He hates divorce, but he loves you. and if you have been through one, I promise you that his heart is broken for you, its not angry at you. and the cross of Jesus Christ is far more powerful then whether or not you were able to hold together your marriage 15 years ago. Or two years ago.

And even if you aren't married in this place today, I hope that you didn't tune me out... because statistics say you have been affected.

and if you have been impacted by one, or it happened to your parents, or it happened to your friends and for the last five years you have felt like you had to chose a side, and you have stood by one, while hating the other, or you have been mad at them both, because they tore apart a community of people who used to be close and now won't even talk to each other...

remember, there are two sides to every story. There is the part you see, and the part you don't see. and a lot of the times, the part you don't see is filled with a lot of pain. and a lot of hurt, and confusion, and hard decisions.

and maybe there is a side to the story that would change your mind if you heard it, but for integrities sake... it is never told...

Because it doesn't matter what is there.
It matter's that it is there.

That in almost every circumstance like this, you are not qualified to make a judgment on what is going on, but you are called to be the grace to gets them through it.

Paul reminds us that we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. Not counting people's trespasses against them.

Even in Leviticus, on YOM KIPPUR every year, the sins of the people went away with the goat. Once a year they got a clean start... and nobody was allowed to hold it against them anymore.

and Jesus died on a tree so that you wouldn't have to wait for YOM KIPPUR every year.

Please, err on the side of grace toward others, in divorce, and in every circumstance. We never get a full window into their lives. We just don't. We don't know what happens behind every closed door.

and if you are in this place and you are married...

You have been given a gift. It is one of the greatest gifts in the entire world. and sometimes in life its not going to feel like a gift, but if every day you treat it as one, then every day it will feel like one.

We are in these relationships with other sinful people trying to navigate life together. and WHEN AND IF it feels like its just not navigating properly... talk to someone. Don't let the first time we hear about an issue be when there is treason. Don't let the first time anyone finds out that you are hurting be when you are throwing in the towel. God is in the business of restoring people's lives and if there is even an ounce of life left in your marriage he can breath a whole new world of hope into it.

and he wants too. Because he doesn't want you to go through what he went through.