

Matthew 5:31-32
 Sermon on the Mount
 MT1016

July 4, 2010 am
 Laws of the Kingdom

“PREVENTING DIVORCE”

INTRODUCTION: We are three weeks into the second section of the Sermon on the Mount...

1. In chapter 5:17-48, Christ is setting straight our thoughts about the Law of God – the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic statutes that flowed from them...
 - a. He is correcting the moralistic, legalistic and undermining influence of the Pharisees concerning the Law of God.
 - b. The teaching of the great rabbis
 - c. “*You have heard that it was said...*” – the Rabbinical distortions of the Old Testament laws...
 - d. “*But I say...*” – Christ's own, divine and original interpretation.
2. **Sinclair B. Ferguson:** *The Sermon on the Mount: Kingdom Life in a Fallen World* (p. 81)
 - a. *The real contrast in this section is between the meaning of the law according to Jesus and the meaning of the law according to religious tradition and the ancient teachers. That is, the religious teachers, not the authors of Scripture. He does not say, ‘It is written,’ but, ‘It was said.’ Jesus is not referring here to texts in Scripture, but to the traditional teaching of the rabbis.*
 - b. Jesus is **not** contradicting Moses.
 - c. Christ is correcting the famous rabbis who lived in the 4 centuries prior to his own birth.
3. **Jesus faced a major problem that all preachers and pastors face:** *The challenge of changing people’s minds once they have been set by famous teachers.*
 - a. Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai were *the* most revered teachers of the New Testament Jewish age.
 - i. The *Hillel* School of Rabbinical thought: **Hillel the Elder** of Babylon (110BC-10BC)
 - ii. The Hillel School of thought was “milder,” more liberal, source of modern-day Judaism.
 - iii. **Shammai** (50BC-30AD) was stricter than Hillel.
 - iv. Shammai’s school of thought gave birth to the Pharisees and the Zealots: conservative, extreme, right wing of Judaism.
 - v. The two great schools lived together in the *Sanhedrin* (religious ruling body of Judaism)
 - vi. **Wikipedia:** “*Shammai*” (p. 1)

After Menahem the Essene had resigned the office of vice-president of the Sanhedrin, Shammai was elected to it, Hillel being at the time president. After Hillel died, circa 20AD, Shammai took his place as president but no vice-president from the minority was elected so that the school of Shammai attained complete ascendancy. Hillel’s grandson Gamaliel succeeded to the position of president after Shammai in the year 30, but the

Sanhedrin would remain dominated by the house of Shammai until around 70. A “voice from heaven” is said to have nullified the legality of the rulings of the house of Shammai, which is why Rabbinical Judaism follows Hillel.

4. **Gamaliel** was the grandson of Hillel; a mild-mannered and temperate rabbi who spoke with great moderation and fairness:

When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice. (Acts 5:33-39)

5. **Saul of Tarsus** (Paul) was a disciple of Gamaliel and the School of Hillel, who leaned toward the harshness of the School of Shammai.

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. (Acts 22:3-5)

6. For the people, what these two Rabbis taught was considered the ultimate authority in the interpretation of the law –
- a. Jesus opposed these two schools of rabbinic interpretation – *both of them.*

- b. **Leon Morris:** *The Gospel According to Matthew; p. 388*

“The tradition of the elders” arose because pious Jews were very careful about keeping the law. They saw the law as God’s greatest gift to the human race and regarded it as a wonderful privilege that the Jews, the people of God, had received it. They considered it important that they should treasure the law and practice its every provision. So they studied it with diligence; the Mishnah and the Talmud reveal the closeness of their study and the detail into which they went.

- c. *Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” he need not honor his*

father. ' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

*“This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:1-9)*

7. For Jesus to correct both *Hillel* and *Shammai* was very, very, very unpopular with the people who idolized these men.
8. **I face that same problem with most of you.** I am unsettling many because of the books I quote, the authors I read, the applications I make.
 - a. Why? *Because the same two schools of thought exist in Christ Covenant Church.*
 - b. **The School of Shammai:** the right wing of Christ Covenant Church
 - i. *The Puritans, Reformed Theologians, Calvin, Boice, Piper, MacArthur, Lloyd-Jones, A. W. Pink, Sinclair Ferguson, etc...*
 - ii. Theologically conservative and protective
 - iii. Republican and conservative voices
 - iv. “The Legacy” of Christ Covenant Church
 - v. **Question:** *Are all these sources correct all the time?*
 - c. **The School of Hillel:** the progressive wing of Christ Covenant Church
 - i. *Dallas Willard, James Bryan Smith, John Stott, D. A. Carson, Tim Keller, etc...*
 - ii. Gospel-focused and evangelistic
 - iii. New ideas, pro-Obama statements
 - iv. The “legalism” of Christ Covenant Church
 - v. **Question:** *Is the new way always the right way and is historic, confessional theology bad?*
 - d. Is one the right way and the other the wrong way?
 - e. Answer: *No. They are both wrong when “the teaching and doctrines of men” hinder both our understanding of God’s Word (conservative theology) and our obedience to God’s Word (contemporary application).*
9. **Please allow me to tell you five things I wish you would keep in mind:**
 - a. **First:** I am *not* drifting from my reformed theological understanding of Scripture or my conservative approach to ethics or politics. No need to fear that I am “a liberal in republican clothing.”
 - b. **Second:** I am *not* recommending that you become a devotee of any author I quote, from Dallas Willard to John Calvin. All human teachers are fallible.

- c. **Third:** *I will continue* to quote people who are correct in what I'm quoting, even though they may be wrong in other things – George Bush or Barak Obama, John Stott or Al Mohler, Luther or Billy Graham.
 - d. **Fourth:** *I will continue* to challenge your way of thinking and living if I sense that it is unbiblical. *If you don't need me to do this, then you don't need to sit under the preached Word because you already have all the right answers and you do all the right things.*
 - e. **Fifth:** *It is my intent* that Jesus Christ speak to us in His Word, unhindered by our own white, conservative, suburban, middle-class and comfortable paradigms.
10. This *will indeed* cause tension between many of you and my sermons – a tension I hope is constructive, that forces you to think deeper and broader, and captures your hearts and minds for Christ –
- a. *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* (Heb. 4:12)
 - b. *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
 - c. **I do not believe that all of us have all the right answers all of the time and that all of those who disagree with us are always wrong.**
11. **Let me add this:** *If I do not preach this way, then I am condemned to the cowardly fate of telling you each week what you already know so that you never feel convicted to change...grow...become more holy.*
- a. Sermons about the *TULIP* or the *Sola's*
 - b. Baptizing our Republican politics
 - c. Conservative legalism that becomes “The Law”
 - d. A Gospel held captive by our culture
 - e. *I simply refuse to do that...ever!*
12. And so did **Jesus Christ...**
- a. *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* (Matthew 5:17-20)
 - b. So...Jesus begins to correct Hillel and Shammai:
 - c. Just as I might disagree with **Piper** or **Keller** – the two great rabbis of our time.
 - d. Jesus corrects **six false** rabbinic traditions

- i. Ader and contempt, lust and divorce – *the more liberal approach of Hillel*
- ii. Oaths and vows, revenge, treatment of one’s enemies – *the stricter approach of Shammai*

13. **Kris Decker** spoke to you three weeks ago about anger, contempt and reconciliation. (good message)

14. **Gabe Sylvia** spoke to you last Sunday about lust. (a timely, well-aimed message)

15. Incidentally: *I did not assign these young men a sermon about their “pet sins.” ☺ So don’t think that Jane and I are having marital problems because I now turn with you to Matthew 5:31-32.*

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. (Matthew 5:31-32)

I. THE FALSE TEACHING ABOUT DIVORCE

It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ (Matthew 5:31)

1. **Wikipedia:** “Hillel and Shammai” (p. 1)

The House of Shammai held that a man may only divorce his wife for a serious transgression, but the House of Hillel allowed divorce for even trivial offenses, such as burning a meal.

- 2. Remember: The *Hillel School of Interpretation* held sway in Judaism’s view of divorce.
- 3. According to Hillel, a Jewish man could divorce his wife for any reason that made her displeasing to himself – she grew old, fat, cranky; she was unfaithful; she misspent his money; she burned his meal, etc...
- 4. Jesus had to deal with this problem of Hillel’s interpretation on more than one occasion. Look at **Matthew 19:1-9...**

- a. *Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.*

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.” (Matthew 19:1-9)

- b. Rabbi Hillel interpreted **Deuteronomy 24:1-4** in a most liberal manner...

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, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, 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, 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. (Deut. 24:1-4)

- c. **William Hendriksen** sets forth the dilemma Jesus faced with this issue of divorce (*Matthew: NTC, p. 714*)

According to Shammai and his followers the reference was to unchastity or adultery. According to Hillel and his disciples the meaning was far broader. They emphasized the words, "If then she finds no favor in his eyes," and accordingly would allow divorce for the flimsiest reasons, so that the husband could reject his wife if she accidentally served him food that had been slightly burned, or if at home she talked so loud that the neighbors could hear her. If Jesus endorsed the more strict interpretation, favored by Shammai, He would be displeasing the followers of Hillel. Moreover, there seem to have been very many who agreed with Hillel's "liberal" opinion. Even the disciples may have shared this view. On the other hand, if Jesus endorsed the lax – "anything will do as ground for divorce" – interpretation, what would the disciples of Shammai think of Him? Would not the more serious and conscientious people charge Him with tolerating moral looseness? And what would the female part of the population think of Him?

5. Here is what Hillel taught: *A man could divorce his wife for any reason, provided he follows the correct procedure...*
- a. i.e., the "*Bill of Divorce*"
 - b. The Greek word *apostasiōn*: (Matthew 19:7) – a document releasing the right to personal ownership of property.
 - c. **Note:** *Women had no right to divorce a man!*
 - d. The exact wording was the key issue: "*I divorce my wife for the following reasons: _____ . And I grant her express permission to marry another man. I release her from this marriage.*"
 - e. Signed by two witnesses; presented to the rabbi and officers of the synagogue.
 - f. **Leon Morris:** *Matthew: Pillar NTC; p. 480*

It was accepted throughout Judaism that a man had the right to divorce his wife, though a woman had no such right to divorce her husband. In some circumstances she could petition the court, and the court might direct her husband to divorce her, but even then the actual divorcing was done by the husband. The husband was given the right by an express provision of the law (Deuteronomy 24:1-4); the Pharisees' question was not whether a man had the right to divorce his wife, but rather what grounds justified him in proceeding to divorce her.

6. You can imagine what duress, poverty, shame, unjust harm and personal pain this caused women in Jesus' day.
 - a. Esp. the elderly, the barren, the disfigured, the injured, the terminally ill, those who'd grown unattractive over years of child-bearing, keeping house, and working hard for a husband.
 - b. *Jesus stands here as a great advocate of women and the sanctity of marriage.*
7. **Christ is no one's fool.** He knows the sinful hearts of both males and females, husbands and wives...
 - a. He understood the *mind games* people play and the *marital cruelty* common to mankind.
 - b. Husbands who are unkind, unattentive or harsh with their wives until they leave home – *desertion!*
 - c. Wives who neglect their appearance, focus solely on the kids, are unresponsive to their husbands' sexual or emotional needs until he finds solace in another woman's arms – *adultery!*
8. You see, we still play the *Hillel Game* of cheap divorces:
 - a. We decide to bolt the marriage.
 - b. We manipulate a spouse into desperate sin.
 - c. Then we run to the pastors and elders of the church and ask for "*A Bill of Divorce.*"
 - d. Forget the *spirit* of the Law of Marriage

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)
 - e. Focus only on the *letter* of divorce proceedings: *irreconcilable differences, alienation of affections, neglect of conjugal rights and duty, cruel and inhuman treatment, etc...*
 - f. *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."* (Matthew 19:4-6)
9. Here is Christ's correction for easy, legal and unbiblical divorces...

II. THE TRUE TEACHING ABOUT 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. (Matthew 5:32)

1. Jesus reinforces Moses' intent and God's will in the institution of divorce proceedings in Deuteronomy 24:1-9.

- a. *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.” (Matthew 19:8-9)*
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. (Matthew 5:32)
 - b. **Please listen!** Moses instituted the Bill of Divorcement for two reasons –
 - i. God instructed him to do so.
 - ii. God intended to make divorce *more difficult* to obtain.
 - iii. **But surely not easier**
 - c. It was *Rabbi Hillel*, not God, Jesus or Moses, who made divorce convenient and easy!
 - d. **Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Gittin (folio 90a) The Mishnah...**
Beth Shammai say: a man should not divorce his wife unless he has found her guilty of some unseemly conduct, as it says, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her. Beth Hillel, however, say [that he may divorce her] even if she has merely spoilt his food, since it says, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her. R. Akiba says, [he may divorce her] even if he finds another woman more beautiful than she is, as it says, it cometh to pass, if she find no favour in his eyes.
 - e. **Divorce made easy for men and acceptable for women!**
2. Christ's point is this: *Marriage is a lifelong covenant between two souls – a man (male) and a woman (female) – whereby the two become “one flesh” ...one life together until death separates the two souls.*
 - a. Only two things may lead to divorce; two fundamental violations of the Covenant of Marriage.
 - b. **First:** *Sexual infidelity (adultery)*
 - i. *moicheia*: Greek word “adultery”
 - ii. sexual sins that defile the marriage: sleeping with someone other than your spouse – male or female; visiting prostitutes; unrepentant pornography; incest; molestation; etc. (*you get the picture*)
 - iii. *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. (Matthew 5:32)*
 - c. **Second:** *The desertion of the marriage by an unbelieving spouse.*
 - i. Leaving the marriage or home with no intention of returning.
 - ii. Running off with another man/woman; moving out for good; legal separation without an end date; just saying “I quit. I need my freedom. I’m gone!”

- iii. But also: *those things tantamount to desertion* (which the church officers must decide on valid reasons for divorce)
- iv. *To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.*

To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. (1 Corinthians 7:10-13)

3. **The Divine Intent is clear:** *God does not want to make it easier for us to divorce, but more difficult for us to do so. He intends to force us to remain in a marriage with another sinner, work at our relationship, perfect each other and benefit from the sanctifying effect marriage has upon men and women.*
4. The “rabbis” of our age have taken up the School of Hillel approach. It’s called **no-fault divorce**.
 - a. God says, *“Every time a marriage ends in divorce, one, two or more people are at fault.”*
 - b. There is really no such thing as a faultless divorce. Someone had to cause the breakup –
 - c. ...often it is both parties!
 - d. *Jesus sides with Shammai on the issue of Divorce!*
5. I want you to see the **progression** of Jesus’ thoughts. His paragraphs build on His thoughts and ideas...
 - a. Anger, contempt, frustration with others...

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. (Matthew 5:21-22)
 - b. Refusal to forgive and reconcile with others...

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you. Leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. (Matthew 5:23-26)
 - c. Lust: desire for the beautiful wife of another, the young, unmarried girl, the “perfect man,” or the nice man next door to me...

“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. (Matthew 5:27-30)

- d. Divorce: the result of anger, contempt, unforgiveness, irreconciliation, fantasies and lusts...

“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. (Matthew 5:31-32)

- e. **Dallas Willard:** *The Divine Conspiracy* (p. 172)

It is not an accident that Jesus deals with divorce after having dealt with anger, contempt, and obsessive desire. Just ask yourself how many divorces would occur, and in how many cases the question of divorce would never even have arisen, if anger, contempt, and obsessive fantasized desire were eliminated. The answer is, of course, hardly any at all.

6. **Listen to what Jesus is saying:** *Marriage is less about your happiness than it is about your holiness. I gave you a wife to purify your heart, to focus your eyes, to overcome your selfishness and to make you grow up! She is not your doting mother, she is your balance in life. And I gave you a husband to destroy your silly girlish fantasies about Prince Charming, to give you children, to draw you out of your self-focused feminism and to force you to work with a man to build a godly life and family, and not to spoil and pamper you – like Daddy did! I am less interested in romance and “great sex” than I am self-giving love and godly character.*

7. **This is what Hillel missed:** Our unrealistic expectations of “living happily ever after” can never support the weight of reality. The only thing that can do that is a Christ-centered covenant!

Wilt thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all other keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live?

I, take thee, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God’s holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge thee my faith.

8. **By the way...just for the record:** You did not get married by just the two of you. It took four parties to contract a God-ordained and acceptable marriage.

a. Man...woman...church...state...

b. It will take the same four parties to dissolve the marriage...

c. Husband...wife...church officers...a legal divorce

d. Moses’ procedure of Deuteronomy 24; Jesus’ instructions of Matthew 5 and 19; Paul’s inspired guidelines of 1 Corinthians 7; the government of the church and the laws of the state *all concur: Marriages should work to survive!*

e. You can’t end a marriage with two or three of the four parties agreeing. All four must concur.

CONCLUSION: Why is Jesus so concerned about these things?

1. Christ is telling us that there are certain *parameters of life* and specific *cycles of nature* that cannot be disrupted without dire consequences for everyone...
2. **The Sanctity of Life** and the issues of murder, violent crime, war, abortion and euthanasia. (*anger*)
3. **The Dignity of all Mankind** and the evils of racism, chauvinism, feminism, child abuse, corruption and disrespect for all authority. (*contempt*)
4. **The Sanctity of Sexuality** and unbridled desires: porn, prostitution, fornication, homosexuality, “hooking up,” x-rated entertainment, licentious men, sensuous women and ravaged children (*lust*)
5. **The Permanence of Marriage** and stability of the family: *all the spiritual, psychological, and social ills of divorce.*
6. **Dallas Willard:** *The Divine Conspiracy* (p. 170)

Perhaps one of the hardest things for the contemporary mind to accept is that life runs in natural cycles that cannot be disrupted without indelible damage to the individuals involved. In the order of nature some things can simply never be regained if they are lost. Divorce also powerfully disrupts one of the major natural cycles of human existence. And the individuals involved can never be the same—whether or not a divorce was, everything considered, justifiable.

7. Jesus is very clear. He wants to protect marriage. He intends to preserve the family. He promotes the welfare of children, the protection of women and the legitimate needs of men. He **intends** to make getting a **divorce** much, much more **difficult**.
8. *Marriages can be and are, at times, difficult. Divorce should be even more difficult in order to force us to stay in a marriage, get help from the church, grow in spiritual maturity and bless the family, the church and society by means of happy, stable, holy homes.*
9. It isn't easy. God never said it would be. But the stakes are high, the challenge is great and God's grace is even greater.

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21)

10. **Nothing tests the power of the Gospel and the reality of God's grace like a human marriage!**
11. *But...nowhere do the love and power of Jesus and His Kingdom manifest themselves greater than in a marriage.*
12. Why don't you stop looking for “a way out” of your marriage and start looking for the way to let Christ into your marriage. If Jesus can save your damned soul, He can also save your damaged marriage.
13. The story of “Joe”: “Not anymore” (the anger was gone! The marriage was saved).
14. Let's stop listening to Hillel, stop trying to find a way around Moses, and stop consulting attorneys...let's ask Jesus to save our households!

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However,

let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.
(Ephesians 5:31-33)

16. ...then let's wait for what King Jesus will do!