

Home Group Notes Testing Times 4

Mark 10:1-12 Marriage issues

Introduction

It is a rather sad reflection of our society that an everyday issue such as marriage (which affects our lives profoundly) has become so difficult to talk about. It might encourage us that for Jesus it was the same. Pastorally a minefield, linguistically like walking on eggshells, and saying anything severely dented his popularity / credibility with one set of people or another. However Jesus didn't duck it. How could we?

1. How have good marriages or bad marriages had an impact on your life? Have you felt the experience of those affected-by marriage break up (as a parent? Spouse? child? Family friend?)
2. Do you know a better arrangement than marriage for providing lifelong stability for children, vulnerable adults and households?
3. Read vv.1-4 For Jesus, it wasn't just a pastoral minefield. It was also a dangerous political dilemma. In v.1, Mark is quite precise about the location. The area was ruled by Herod Antipas and his wife Herodias, who were infamous remarried divorcees. What did John the Baptist say about their actions? What happened to him (6:18)? What danger might Jesus face by answering like John?
4. Talking about the rights and wrongs of marriage and divorce is difficult because of many people's strong experiences. If Jesus had avoided answering might he have offended fewer people?
5. Being tested by marriage lawyers (which is what Jewish religious leaders were) is never a good place to be. But at least Jesus knew he shared the scriptures as his authority. How did Jesus show he upheld the authority of the Bible?
6. Is the Bible your authority in all matters of faith and conduct?
7. The Pharisees started the discussion at Deuteronomy 24:1ff which is the permission for a husband to divorce his wife by writing a certificate if he finds her being indecent. This was for men only and was frequently abused in Jesus' time. e.g. How many times had the woman been divorced in John 4?

8. Read vv.5-9 What was Jesus' reason for not taking Dt 24 as the starting point for God's purpose in marriage and divorce? Where did Jesus turn?

9. Which of these statements is clear from Jesus' words?

marriage is between a man and a woman

this is the central relationship in the family unit

deep unity and sexual relations are part of this bond

this is for life and the purpose of it is not to separate

10. The statement which the disciples found hardest to accept was the last, because they asked Jesus about it straightaway. How clear was Jesus in his further answer for his followers?

11. How does this answer show Jesus' radical determination that men and women should be treated equally in these matters?

12. Are you able to accept Jesus' clear teaching for yourself? If we are new Christians it can take time to accept all that Jesus says but for mature Christians, what is it to follow Christ? Do you think we can pick and choose which of his teachings we follow?

13. Is this teaching applicable to all humans?

14. Can you see that it is because we want to be faithful to Jesus that our church remarries only those who have been the victims of divorce through adultery and desertion and violence? Are there other ways we can help our generation try not to be like Jesus' 'wicked and adulterous' generation?

15. We welcome everyone to church, including many divorcees, and we believe in forgiveness for every type of sin or blasphemy. 'Forgiveness comes when we admit what is sin and turn from it, not when we redefine sin and bless it.' Discuss.

Prayer Points

Pray for faithfulness to Jesus' teaching in the Church of England

Pray for those doing our church membership course and those preparing for confirmation

Pray that you invite someone to the guest service at St G's on 12th March