

## Reel Divorce...Scenes from the Cutting Room Floor

### Core Competency Hope

Ephesians 4:17-28

### Core Competencies

#### Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

#### Core Practices

- Worship Prayer
- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

#### Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- **Hope**
- Humility

Dear Friends,

Divorce—it's a difficult subject and a far more difficult and painful experience for virtually everyone involved. We need to look at this issue for a number of reasons. First, it affects all of us. Who among us doesn't have divorce in our family or in our circle of relationships somewhere? Second, we need to think biblically. We need to understand God's intent regarding marriage and what He says to us about divorce, too. Finally, we need to think deeply and biblically about how to respond to people who have experienced divorce. How do we balance grace and truth as we seek to love others like Jesus would? That's a lot to tackle, but let's dig in together and ask God to help us to enlarge our hearts and our understanding.

In His Grace,

*Richard Gotthardt*

## Engaging Our Minds & Hearts

### Day 1

#### Today's Passages: Genesis 2:21-25, Mark 10:6-9

This week's sermon title is "Reel Divorce...Scenes from the Cutting Room Floor." In our study of God's Word, we will seek to better understand and speak God's truth in love to the day-to-day experiences of a large percentage of our culture at large, as well as to those within the body of Christ.

Before beginning our time in God's Word, it is imperative that we ask for His divine revelation of Himself, His ways, His will and His character. The truths contained in the Bible are not ones we simply see and apply in our own knowledge, wisdom or power. As Jesus responded to Simon Peter's statement of faith in **Matthew 16:16-17**, "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." Allow God's Holy Spirit to direct your thinking, your meditation and the personal application of His truth to your heart and life.

Divorce – according to Webster's dictionary is the legal and formal dissolution of a marriage, to separate or disunite. Read **Genesis 2:21-25 and Mark 10:6-9** and record what these verses plainly reveal regarding God's design and desire for marriage.

Our world, our hearts, our choices, and our lives do not always line up with God's designs and desires. The result of this is we miss the mark. We don't measure up. We sin.

Now let's go back to the beginning of the conversation and read **Mark 10:1-9**. In verses 6-9, Jesus had clearly laid out God's original design and purpose. Who and what was this in contrast to? Why did Jesus say that Moses permitted or allowed for divorce?

The definition for the Greek word translated in the NIV "hearts were hard" includes stubbornness, obstinacy and perverseness. It indicates man's attitude toward God and His grace when he ought to have a willing and receptive heart.

Are there any areas of your life that because your heart was hard you have missed the mark? Failed to measure up to God's plan? Sinned? Take a few minutes and quietly sit in God's presence allowing Him to speak. Tell Him that it is your desire to always respond to Him with a willing and receptive heart.

## Day 2

**Today's Passage: Malachi 2:13-17, 1 Corinthians 7:10-15, Matthew 19:1-10**

### ***Pray first!***

1. Read **Malachi 2:13-17**, quoted here from *The Message*. Circle the words that clearly reveal God's heart on this topic. Ask yourself if the things that break God's heart, break yours.  
<sup>13</sup> And here's a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don't get what you want from God. <sup>14</sup> Do you know why? Simple. Because God was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride, and now you've broken those vows, broken the faith-bond with your vowed companion, your covenant wife. <sup>15</sup> God, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. And what does He want from marriage? Children of God, that's what. So guard the spirit of marriage within you. Don't cheat on your spouse. <sup>16</sup> "I hate divorce," says the God of Israel. God-of-the-Angel-Armies says, "I hate the violent dismembering of the 'one flesh' of marriage." So watch yourselves. Don't let your guard down. Don't cheat. <sup>17</sup> You make God tired with all your talk. "How do we tire Him out?" you ask. By saying, "God loves sinners and sin alike. God loves all." And also by saying, "Judgment? God's too nice to judge."
2. Scripture also records what some call "biblical grounds" for divorce. We will look at those passages as well. Read Jesus' words from **Matthew 19:9** and God's teachings through the apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 7:10-15**. Record what you see as allowances for a divorce.
3. According to **verse 10 of 1 Corinthians 7**, if there is a divorce, what options are available after the divorce?
4. Now go back to the **Matthew 19** passage and read **verses 1-10**. This is the parallel passage of the account in **Mark 10**, which we looked at yesterday. After the exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus, the disciples begin to question Jesus further about the option of divorce. How did the disciples respond to Jesus' teaching? From their response, do you think they understood the high value God put on the permanence of a marriage relationship? Why or why not?
5. What is your response to this teaching from God? Have you allowed your heart to be hardened by your own sin or by the sin and worldly standards that are so rampant around each of us? Pray and ask God to transform your life as He renews your mind through the truth He reveals to you.

## Day 3

**Today's Passage: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 John 1:5-2:2**

***Pray first!***

**Divorce.** Is it what God desires? Is it an option? Under what circumstances? Have you missed the mark in this area? In God's eyes, is this sin different from others? What is God's answer for all of our sin? Today we will continue to seek the answers from God's Word.

1. Read **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**. What sins are listed here?
2. What does Paul mean when he says, "and such were some of you" (v11)?
3. How does God deal with these sins?
4. What if you were divorced after you became a Christian? Does this cancel out your salvation? Read **1 John 1:5-2:2**. What does this passage tell you about God's answer for sin of any kind in your life?

## Day 4

**Today's Passages: Ephesians 4:1-32**

***Pray first!***

Each of us, regardless of the sins of our past, are told in **Philippians 3:13-14** to forget what lies behind and reach forward to what lies ahead. Once we have confessed and repented of our sin and received God's forgiveness and cleansing, we must all press on toward the goal of daily reflecting the character of God in our lives.

Today we will look at **Ephesians 4**, which speaks to each of us as how to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling" (NAS). The Greek word, translated "walk," carries the idea of being occupied, making one's way or progress, and making due use of our opportunities.

Read carefully through this chapter several times in different versions. If you have internet capabilities, you may go to [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) to access a variety of translations. As you read, notice the contrast being presented between the "old self" and the "new self."

1. On a separate sheet of paper, make two lists from this chapter. The first, all the things involved in walking in the "old" self. The second, the practices, character, and goal of walking in the "new."
2. Reflect on the list concerning your old self. Not a pretty sight for any of us. But, did you notice how your "new" self was created in verse 24? Regardless of how your "old" self looked or what your particular sins were, each of us has a new self—created after the same pattern. What is that pattern? Did you catch that none of us is more or less righteous and holy than the others! How does this truth encourage you?
3. To close out your time for today, reflect on the pattern clearly laid out for each of us to walk in as new creations. Identify specific areas of your daily life where you need to apply these truths to your life. As a matter of self-discipline, write them out below and ask God to continue to renew your mind and your walk.

## Day 5

### **Pray first!**

This week's creed for our core competency of hope states, "I can cope with the hardships of life and death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ." Hebrews 6:17-20 says, "*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*"

Read the following quote and ask yourself, "Has someone or something taken away my hope?" "Do I need a new source of hope?"

### **Hope Springs Eternal**

The English poet Alexander Pope wrote, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast: Man never is, but always to be blest." But where does man turn when hope dries up?

The director of a medical clinic told of a terminally ill young man who came in for his usual treatment. A new doctor who was on duty said to him casually and cruelly, "You know, don't you, that you won't live out the year?"

As the young man left, he stopped by the director's desk and wept. "That man took away my hope," he blurted out. "I guess he did," replied the director. "Maybe it's time to find a new one."

Commenting on this incident, Lewis Smedes wrote, "Is there a hope when hope is taken away? Is there hope when the situation is hopeless? That question leads us to Christian hope, for in the Bible, hope is no longer a passion for the possible. It becomes a passion for the promise." *Our Daily Bread*, December 19, 1996 <sup>1</sup>

Perhaps you are feeling so stuck in despair over your circumstances that you are having a hard time expecting that God would really offer you His hope, for now and eternity. Read the following quote and ask yourself if the offer of God's forgiveness, restoration and a new holy and righteous self created in His likeness is open even to you.

### **The Dying Boy**

The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind."

The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live."

Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?" *Bits and Pieces*, July, 1991 <sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the unique challenges and pain that divorced, remarried and blended families face is not the same as those that you deal with. But no doubt within your natural and faith family, there are many who struggle in these areas, and we are to strengthen and build up one another. Read the following quote, and allow God to speak to you regarding your responsibility to share God's healing words of hope.

### **Laboratory Experiment**

A number of years ago researchers performed an experiment to see the effect hope has on those undergoing hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned. When that happened, the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours. Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope!

Those animals somehow hoped that if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and rescue them. If hope holds such power for unthinking rodents, how much greater should its effect be on our lives.

*Today in the Word*, May, 1990, MBI, p. 34<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

What is helpful?  
What could be better?  
What is missing?  
Is it helping you be more prepared for Sunday?

Send your feedback to  
[engage@gccaz.org](mailto:engage@gccaz.org)

### **Ephesians 4:17-28 Living as Children of Light**

**<sup>17</sup>So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.**

- ◆ The NIV begins this verse with “so.” A stronger “therefore” is probably better. It is a strong word that resumes Paul’s argument from 4:1-3 to “walk.” Therefore, the section that follows is a part of “walking” the Christian walk.
- ◆ The idea of walking is a common theme in Ephesians, used earlier in chapter 2 verses 2 & 10 and chapter 4 verse 1.

**<sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.**

- ◆ Because of the futility of their thinking and their darkened understanding, they are also separated from the source of such thought and understanding—God.
- ◆ “Ignorance” is the ultimate reason for their state. We often think of ignorance as an excuse or a reason to not be culpable (ex. “Ignorance is bliss.”). However in Jewish and ancient Greek understanding “ignorance” was not an excuse but rather a shameful trait. This culpability is heightened by the following phrase, “due to the hardening of their hearts.”

**<sup>19</sup>Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.**

- ◆ “In this depiction, the lack of moral feeling and discernment on the part of the Gentiles means an inability to exercise any restraint in their plunge into degrading activities.”<sup>1</sup>

**<sup>20</sup>You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. <sup>21</sup>Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.**

- ◆ Literally, “This is not how you learned Christ.” Christ is what has been learned. This is a unique usage, but very powerful.

**<sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

- ◆ Most commentators believe the writer was dependent on Colossians 3:8-10 for verses 22-24.

**<sup>25</sup>Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.**

- ◆ This verse starts a new paragraph in the writer’s thoughts.
- ◆ This paragraph moves from the general to the specific in talking about falsehood and truth.

**<sup>26</sup>“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup>and do not give the devil a foothold.**

- ◆ Note that here and in other places in Scripture “anger” is not a sin. Anger is an emotion which can, if not dealt with properly and appropriately, lead to sin.

**<sup>28</sup>He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.**

- ◆ An important biblical principle can be drawn from this verse. Notice that the writer tells the reader what not to do (steal). But he does not leave it there. He tells him what to do in place of the former practice (work). Too often, Christianity becomes about what we shouldn’t do.

<sup>1</sup>Lincoln, A. T. (2002). *Vol. 42: Word Biblical Commentary : Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary (Page 279). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.