



## Why Is This Study So Important?

MATTHEW 19:2–6

*The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*

*<sup>4</sup> And he answered and said unto them, **Have ye not read**, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*

*<sup>5</sup> And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

*<sup>6</sup> Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

### **Introduction**

Our study this semester on biblical manhood and womanhood is one of the most important topics facing believers today. The secular world around us is aggressively and unashamedly proclaiming its opinions, viewpoints, and beliefs about the nature of manhood and womanhood and the roles men and women have in life. Furthermore, their answers are not shaped by Scripture but by the consensus of those living within a particular culture or society. Finally, their answers have an impact on almost every major arena in which we as believers are called to live out our faith.

People living in today's world are asking difficult questions that speak to the very heart of personal identity (what it means to be a person), personal role and responsibility (who am I and what role do I have in life), and personal relationships (what is marriage, what are its boundaries, and what is my role)? These questions are complicated, complex, and compelling—they cannot be avoided. Here are examples of the kind of questions our series is designed to address:

1. What does the Bible say about our sexual identity?
2. What does it mean to be a man?
3. What does it mean to be a woman?
4. What does the Bible say about transgenderism?
5. What constitutes a marriage?
6. What are the biblical boundaries of human sexuality—with whom are you to have a consensual sexual relationship?

As we begin our study on this important topic, Jesus provided two important principles to help guide our thinking as we formulate biblical answers to the kinds of questions listed above. Those principles are found in Matthew 19:2–6 where the religious leaders of His day asked Jesus a difficult question designed to “tempt” or test Him.

The way Jesus answered the question provides immense help for us as we face our own difficult questions that often “tempt” us or test us. The specific question put before Jesus was a complex and compelling real-life issue of His day—divorce. Jesus faced the same sort of compelling, real-life questions that believers face today. And just like people were interested to hear Jesus’ answer, people today will want to know your answers.

*Question: As you think about the nature of the compelling question Jesus was asked and the questions listed above, what are some additional questions you would add to this list? What are questions you have been asked or questions you might ask if given the opportunity?*

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Jesus’ response to the Pharisees teaches us two important principles that should shape the way we answer and resolve the questions we face in our own day. Those principles relate to the source Jesus went to for His answer and the way Jesus shaped His answer from the Bible.

***The Question***

Jesus was asked if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for “every cause.” Please note that the question was not about the legality of divorce—it was clearly permitted by the Mosaic Law (Deut. 24:1). The real point of the question was the grounds for divorce—could a man divorce his wife for every cause?

***The Opinions***

There were two primary schools among the rabbis of Jesus’ day concerning divorce. The stricter school was led by Rabbi Shammai who argued that adultery was the only grounds that justified a divorce. The more lenient school was led by Rabbi Hillel who argued that any “indecency” found in the wife by the husband was grounds for divorce. This school had a very broad interpretation and application of “indecency”—from spoiling dinner to not being pretty enough. Clearly people were divided into at least these two strong opinions about divorce.

*Discussion: What strong opinions are generated by the types of questions we are addressing in our series? (See the six questions above.) Why do you think people feel so strongly about their answers?*

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### ***The Motives***

Why were the Pharisees asking Jesus this question? On the surface it may appear they wanted to know His position or perhaps were seeking information. However, Matthew makes their motive very clear—the reason they were asking Jesus this question was to “tempt” Him. If Jesus answered the question as they proposed, it would create tension and conflict.

*Discussion: Why do you think people ask the kinds of questions raised in our series? What might be their motivations? Are there valid and invalid motives that drive questions like these? If so, what might they be?*

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### ***Jesus’ Response***

So, what did Jesus do? He did not side with one viewpoint or the other—instead, He gave an unexpected answer and in so doing, He provided us an important strategy to use as we attempt to answer these same sorts of questions in our day.

### ***The Principles Jesus Displayed***

1. Jesus’ answer was sourced in the Scriptures. ***This tells us where Jesus went to get an answer to the difficult question put before Him.***

Jesus could have appealed to His personal identity as the Son of God. He could have stated His own words and appealed to His own authority as the Son of God. And His words would have been authoritative because He was the Son of God. However, he did something different—He appealed to Scripture—“*Have ye not read?*”

By turning to the Scriptures for His answer, Jesus was establishing that we have a clear, objective, authoritative, divinely revealed Word from God that speaks to crucial moral life issues such as divorce.

In so doing, Jesus established that God’s Word is the source for any final answer on any complex moral issue. Remember earlier we noted that there were strong opinions of thought on both sides of this question? Any answer Jesus gave would potentially create tension and conflict. In answering this way and appealing to Scripture, Jesus pointed to two things about God’s Word that would settle any confusion or conflict among God’s people.

- a. The Authority of Scripture—Like Jesus, we must answer the questions we face in our own day by going to the Scriptures and submitting to its authority.

- b. The Sufficiency of Scripture—Because Scripture is inspired, it is profitable or useful in providing answers to the most compelling questions in life. It is sufficient for guiding us to live a life that honors and pleases God.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. 3:16–17*

**So, our study on divine design is of utmost importance to us because we need a clear, objective, authoritative Word from God on the important and current issues of life that we face today in our contemporary world.**

*Question: Do you think most Christians go to the Bible to get answers to the kinds of questions addressed in our series and mentioned above?*

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*Question: Why do you think many believers struggle to go to God’s Word for answers to these questions?*

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*Discussion: Why do you think some Christians struggle to trust God’s Word when they do hear the answer God gives to these sorts of questions?*

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**2. Jesus appealed to God’s divine design in forming His answer. *This tells us how Jesus used the Scriptures to formulate His answer to the difficult question put before Him.***

Having established the authority of the Word of God as the source for answers to the complex questions and compelling issues believers face, Jesus’ answer reveals a second important principle that helps us answer the compelling questions of our day—He appealed to divine design to form His answer. *And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...*

Notice that Jesus does not focus on the problem, He focuses on the purpose. In other words, instead of talking about **divorce**, He talks about **design**. Not only does He go back to God’s Word, He goes back to God’s design at creation.

This is important because Jesus had come as the Second Adam to restore what had been ruined by the Fall of the First Adam. In other words, He came to redeem, reconcile, and restore what had been broken in the Fall—in this case, human relationships like marriage.

It is interesting that Jesus focused more on the original design that He had come to restore than on the actual question about marriage (and divorce)—His answer basically was “Don’t mess it up!” *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

By going back to God’s original divine design, Jesus is pointing out a fact—that where confusion and complexity exist it is usually caused by sin, self-will, and the rejection of God’s original divine design.

### **Application**

When we face the complex and compelling questions in our day related to sexual identity, manhood, womanhood, gender, sexuality, and marriage we must do what Jesus did. We must go to the Scriptures for our answer and when we get there, we must go back to God’s original design as recorded in His Word.

We can go to the Scriptures for answers because we know they are inspired. We can rely on the Scriptures because they are sufficient. And we can submit to the Scriptures because Jesus came to reverse the curse, redeem us and restore what was ruined by the Fall.

### **Conclusion**

As we wrap up our first message, we must know what Scripture actually says about these matters—we must take seriously Jesus’ question, “Have ye not read?” And we must respond to the truth we find in Scripture by submission to His Word and His will.

*Personal Question: Have you actually taken the time to study the Scriptures for answers to these important questions? If not, what might help you in this process?*

*Personal Reflection: Are you at the place where you are willing to personally respond in submission and obedience to the answers God has given in His Word about these matters?*

