February 26/27, 2005

Study Questions

The Good News About Jesus According to Mark

A Heart For Marriage

Mark 10:1-12

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Opening Discussion

1. What is the difference between orienting our Christian lives around a set of rules and policies versus around a heart for God? Which is easier? Which is more effective?

2. Are we ever guilty of seeing how close to the "line" we can get without stepping over versus really asking what does God want?

   Is it possible to keep the rules or stay within the policy but have a bad heart? What would matter most to God?

3. As a group write a definition of marriage. How might your definition differ from the culture's view of marriage? In what way does our definition of marriage affect our commitment to marriage?

Bible Study

1. Read Mark 10:1-12. It is critical to understand that Jesus is not giving an exhaustive teaching on the subject of divorce and remarriage in this text. He was addressing a very specific issue related to a very specific audience.

   Read Matthew 5:27-32 and Matthew 19:1-12 to confirm that Jesus is not seeking to be exhaustive on the subject of divorce in our text from Mark.

2. Since Jesus has more to say about this subject in other contexts, it is very important to identify the context found in Mark 10:1-12.

   Who asks the question? Is it a sincere question? What is the motive behind the question? What is Jesus seeking to accomplish by His answer?

3. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to get a background on the text Jesus quotes from Moses. In Deuteronomy 22 adultery is punishable by death. Therefore, "indecency" in Deuteronomy 24:1 could not mean adultery.

   What does it mean? Why is this word so vague?

4. In Matthew 5 and 19 people often refer to the "exception clause" (unchastity) as adultery. However, that's not the Greek word used. It's *porneia* from which we get our English word 'pornography'. In Matthew 5 the word for adultery is used in verses 28 and 32. If Jesus meant to limit the exception to adultery, why didn't He use the specific word? *Porneia* is a more general term that would include adultery but is not limited to it. What else did Jesus intend besides adultery in this "exception clause?" Again, why are the terms so general or vague?

5. Read Mark 10:1-12 again. According to Jesus, why did Moses write the commandment in Deuteronomy 24? Does that necessarily represent God's desire?

6. What is God's design for marriage according to Jesus?

7. Is Jesus more concerned about the technicalities of the law or the heart of the people?

   Put this together with the vagueness of the language in Deuteronomy 24 and Matthew 5. Is it possible that God was very intentional in not wanting us to define rigid policies for "loopholes" but rather wants us to focus on people's hearts? Is it possible to feel justified in a divorce on the basis of a technicality (loophole) but still have a bad heart before God?

   What will be the outflow of a right heart before God?

Application

1. What does it take to have a right heart before God? Is there any problem in a marriage that cannot be resolved by two people who have right hearts before God?

2. For those of you who have been divorced, you cannot change the past. There is nothing gained by wallowing in the pain and suffering of past failures. However, with a right heart today, there may be something you need to do to make something right from the past with a former spouse, children, etc… Perhaps your LifeGroup could help you process whether there's anything you need to do or not.

3. Let's all embrace the wonder of God's amazing grace that forgives our sins and once again makes us useful to Him in Christ. There is no sin from the past that disqualifies anyone from serving God effectively today. If you've done what you can to make the past right, put the past behind you and pursue by faith what great thing God has for you to do for Him today.

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