

Matthew 19.1–15

When Jesus had completed these teachings, he left Galilee and crossed the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan. Great crowds followed him there, and he healed them.

One day the Pharisees were badgering him: “Is it legal for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?”

He answered, “Haven’t you read in your Bible that the Creator originally made man and woman for each other, male and female? And because of this, a man leaves father and mother and is firmly bonded to his wife, becoming one flesh—no longer two bodies but one. Because God created this organic union of the two sexes, no one should desecrate his art by cutting them apart.”

They shot back in rebuttal, “If that’s so, why did Moses give instructions for divorce papers and divorce procedures?”

Jesus said, “Moses provided for divorce as a concession to your hard heartedness, but it is not part of God’s original plan. I’m holding you to the original plan, and holding you liable for adultery if you divorce your faithful wife and then marry someone else. I make an exception in cases where the spouse has committed adultery.”

Jesus’ disciples objected, “If those are the terms of marriage, we haven’t got a chance. Why get married?”

But Jesus said, “Not everyone is mature enough to live a married life. It requires a certain aptitude and grace. Marriage isn’t for everyone. Some, from birth seemingly, never give marriage a thought. Others never get asked—or accepted. And some decide not to get married for kingdom reasons. But if you’re capable of growing into the largeness of marriage, do it.”

One day children were brought to Jesus in the hope that he would lay hands on them and pray over them.

The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus intervened: “Let the children alone, don’t prevent them from coming to me. God’s kingdom is made up of people like these.” After laying hands on them, he left.