

Jesus Teaches on Divorce and the Cost of Discipleship

Matthew 19

Group ¹	C	V	Description
Concerning Divorce	19	1-2	Jesus teaches large crowds and heals many while traveling to Judea
		3-9	Divorce for sexual misconduct only
		10-12	Eunuchs: some are born, some are man-made, and some are self-choice for the kingdom of heaven – marriage is a choice not a requirement by God (see 1 Corinthians 7)
Jesus Blesses Little Children		13-15	Jesus blesses the children
The Rich Young Ruler		16-22	Who can be saved? All things are possible with God!
		23-26	Salvation is only possible with God
The Disciples' Reward		27-30	The Disciples' reward

Reflections

This chapter might seem like a series of unrelated topical discussions that Jesus is having with his disciples and others. However, let's consider the topics: divorce, eunuchs, blessing childlike faith, giving up all to follow Jesus, and future blessings of discipleship. The overarching theme is the cost of discipleship.

So how do divorce and eunuchs fit in with the discussions on discipleship. I think the thing to keep in mind is that God did not make marriage mandatory. But from verses 1-12, I think what Jesus is saying is that if you choose to get married, it should be for life, except for sexual infidelity of any kind. Even then if the two people are able to forgive each other, divorce is not required. But the only viable option for divorce in God's eyes is adultery of any kind.

Then his disciples ask if it isn't better to not get married then. Jesus' response is one that clearly shows that marriage is optional, although most men and women are probably better off being married. There is much that could be said about eunuchs and their ability to serve before God under the Old Testament laws so I won't comment on them here.

The third category though deserves some comment, especially when considered in light of 1 Corinthians 7. Those who chose to be eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom might be people who choose to remain single and devote themselves to working for the kingdom of heaven. They are not physically changed *per se*, but make a conscientious choice to remain single.

On a personal note: For those of you who don't know, I'm single, never married, no kids, and recently turned 55. To some people that might throw up some red flags but let me explain my situation.

I guess I kind of fall into this third category. I say this because I have dated women in the past and have even come close to getting married but didn't. After my last relationship, I chose not to date for a time. To be honest, it was for the wrong reason, but then as I started making choices that would bring my life more in line with God's design, I chose not to date until I thought I was ready to be the Spiritual leader I needed to be in a relationship. It's just been a

1 (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

Jesus Teaches on Divorce and the Cost of Discipleship

long time now and my prospects don't seem to be too plentiful and no one is jumping up and down saying, "Here I am James!" Or at least it doesn't seem like that to me.

I believe that when I was in a relationship in the past, some areas of my life were better than they are now as a single person. At the same time, it has probably been easier for me to do some of the things I've done in the past few years because I am single. I didn't necessarily choose to be single, that's just where I'm at because of the choices I've made, if that makes sense. And while I would like to be married, at this time I'm not, so I try to make the best of the time and opportunities that God gives me now to further His kingdom.

Jesus then has a brief interlude where some children are brought to Him so that He might bless them. At first the disciples are rebuking the people bringing them. But Jesus, ever vigilant for the needs of all His children, intercedes.

He allows the children to be brought to Him and makes a curious statement, "for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." I don't believe that Jesus is just talking about those who are young in age, but also those who are young in spirit who are fully dependent on God. This then helps introduce His next discussion of discipleship.

When asked what good thing someone might do to obtain eternal life, Jesus responds with keeping the commandments. This is where the person asking is mistaken. Eternal life cannot be obtained by what we do, but by who we believe in, a point we will see Jesus make shortly.

When the questioner responds by saying that he has done these, he asks what else he lacks. Here, the reader needs to be reminded of the adage: be careful what you ask, you might not like the answer. Jesus responds by telling him to sell everything and give the money to the poor and come follow Him. To which the man left grieving, because he owned much property.

The interchange then changes focus off this man who was questioning Jesus and back on the disciples, who are wondering, "Who can be saved?" To which God responds, it is only possible for God to save anyone and not some good word that a person can do. This prompts the disciples, who have left everything to follow Jesus to ask, "What about us?" Jesus assures them that their reward will be even greater.

Now we know that none of the apostles died a wealthy person and, with the rare exceptions of John and James the Less, they didn't live a long life. All of them suffered much physical pain and loss and all except John died as martyrs.² So their reward was not a physical, earthly reward *per se*, although they did have many Christian brothers and sisters and as a result would never have been without a place to stay or be refreshed if their need were known. Their true reward would come in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

There and Then: Here and Now

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study: *my LOG vs others SPECK*. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

•

P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

•

² (Fox)

* *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (with additions) & Matthew 7:1-5.

Jesus Teaches on Divorce and the Cost of Discipleship

E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?

•

C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?

•

K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit?

•

Key Words: New Testament, Gospels, Matthew, Divorce, Eunuchs, Cost of Discipleship, Rewards of Discipleship



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(NASB) *New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995. Print.