

1 Corinthians 7:10-16

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[0 : 0 0] 1 Corinthians chapter 7, we're beginning today at verse 10 as we continue our series through this book. 1 Corinthians 7, starting at verse 10. These are Paul's words.

To the married, I give this charge, not I, but the Lord. The wife should not separate from her husband, but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband, and the husband should not divorce his wife. To the rest I say, I, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.

If any woman who has a husband who is an unbeliever and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so.

In such cases, the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? How do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your faithful love to us in Jesus Christ, that you will never leave us nor forsake us. As we consider this topic of marriage and divorce, we pray that you would speak to our hearts and our minds through your word and by the power of your spirit. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. So this morning, we come to Paul's instructions about marriage and divorce.

[2 : 0 9] This can be a rough topic, but as we were singing this morning, great is thy faithfulness. Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus. It is well with my soul when peace like a river attendeth my way or when sorrows like sea billows roll. Whatever my lot, you have taught me to say it is well with my soul.

You know, we come together, we're broken people, but we come together because of the faithful love of Christ. So I pray that above all that you would know that this morning. All right, let's dive in.

I think there are at least three factors that affect how we approach this topic of marriage and divorce. Number one, our culture. We live in a culture where divorce is relatively easy. All 50 states have no fault, divorce and common. Now, it's not true that 50% of marriages will end in divorce. That statistic gets thrown around a lot. The divorce rate has actually been going down since 1980, but if current trends hold, about one-third of marriages in the U.S. will end in divorce. Now, part of the reason divorce rates are going down is because fewer people are getting married, more people are just living together and then breaking up rather than getting married and then divorced. Anyway, so that's some of our culture. Second factor is our theology. Now, there's an ongoing debate among scholars and pastors who are all committed in principle to the authority of Scripture, yet come to some very different conclusions about divorce and especially remarriage.

Some of you may be deeply influenced by a particular church teaching, and some of you may be reacting against a particular church teaching that you found to be unhealthy or unbiblical. Now, a few years ago, the elders of Trinity studied this topic together. We wanted to study it when it wasn't immediately a pressing concern in a very personal situation. And so, we developed a working paper that summarized our consensus and that guides our pastoral practice. And what I'll be saying today, this morning, is informed and guided by that consensus. Third factor, I think the most powerful factor for many of us is personal experience. Divorce isn't just a cultural phenomenon or a theological debate. It's a painful and personal reality. Maybe your marriage is deeply troubled and you're wondering, is there any way forward or would divorce be a better solution? Maybe your spouse has told you that they want a divorce and you're trying to figure out how to respond. Maybe you're living in the aftermath of divorce.

Maybe you feel guilt and regret or hurt and betrayal or grief and loneliness. Your life, your family is being torn apart. Maybe you're wondering, how do I move forward after divorce? Should I stay single or should I consider getting married again? Now, some of you may never be in any of these situations, but we all need to consider what it means to come alongside your friends and especially our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in these very situations. Now, in 1 Thessalonians, Paul says to believers, he says, we should admonish the undisciplined, we should encourage the faint-hearted, and we should help the weak. And that's a good picture of Christian love. Sometimes Christian love looks like challenging someone who is stubborn or hard-hearted. Sometimes Christian love looks like encouraging someone who is discouraged, who is faint-hearted, coming alongside them and coming close to them. Sometimes it looks like helping the weak. And that word help means to take hold of someone and not let go of them and say, I'm going to walk with you through this and we're not going to leave you alone. And often Christian love is a mixture of all three of those things, admonishing, encouraging, and helping. So this morning I want to look at this passage in those three dimensions. First, culturally, I want to explain a little bit what this passage would have meant to the first century Corinthian Christians, a little bit of their cultural context compared to ours. Second, theologically, I want to put this passage in context of the other biblical teaching on this topic, but also of the big story of the Bible, God's purpose in creation, and the fact that we are living in a fallen world and how Christ has come to redeem us.

[6 : 49] And third, personally, along the way, I'm going to be giving some personal words of application and implications. So let's dive in. Number one, the cultural context, what this passage would have meant for the first century Corinthian Christians. Look down in your Bibles. There are two paragraphs, verse 10 and 11 and verse 12 through 16. Verses 10 and 11, Paul says to the married, I give this charge. He's talking to couples where both husband and wife are Christian believers.

Now, in this section, Paul reaffirms the explicit teaching of Jesus about marriage and divorce, which is recorded for us in Matthew 19 and Mark 10. We read Mark 10 earlier in the service.

And that's why Paul says in verse 10, not I, but the Lord. In other words, Jesus himself addressed this particular question. I'm just repeating and reiterating what he said in these verses.

Now, verse 12, Paul says to the rest, to the rest, I say, I not the Lord. And in this paragraph, he's talking to Christians who are married to someone who does not share their faith.

Now, what does Paul mean by I not the Lord? Verse 12, Paul is not saying here, this is just my personal opinion. You can take it or leave it.

[8 : 15] No, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he wrote with the authority of an apostle commissioned by Jesus Christ. So at the end of chapter 14, he says, if anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. At the end of this very chapter, he claims to have the spirit of God. Now, what Paul is saying here is, I'm addressing a situation that Jesus did not specifically address in his earthly ministry.

So the church at Corinth, like many of the other new churches that had begun, started springing up all over the Gentile world included many people who were coming out of pagan backgrounds. And sometimes a whole household would come to faith in Jesus. We have a few examples of that. But at other times, only one spouse would come to faith in Christ and the other didn't. So it seems some of the Corinthian Christians were wondering, if I'm in that position, should I stay married to my unbelieving spouse or would it be better to divorce them and marry someone else instead, perhaps someone else more like-minded? Now, in ancient Corinth, here's a little context. Here's a little bit of the cultural context of ancient Corinth. Divorce was even easier than it is today because there was no legal process required. If the wife left home or if the husband sent the wife away, that was considered divorce by separation, even if there wasn't a signed agreement. Sometimes there was a signed agreement, sometimes there wasn't. The only potential legal dispute concerned who would get the dowry, basically how the finances get divided. Anyway. And divorce was very common. So there's one funeral inscription from a Corinthian couple who were married for 41 years. And it read, uncommon are marriages which last so long, brought to an end by death, not broken apart by divorce.

Some scholars estimate, this is only a guess, that maybe the majority of Corinthian marriages ended in divorce. And after divorce, remarriage was expected and encouraged and nearly all ancient divorce certificates explicitly stated that both parties were free to remarry. So this is some of the cultural context in which Paul was writing. Divorce was easy and it was very common. And in this context, Paul sought to give scripturally grounded and contextually appropriate pastoral guidance.

Paul recognized that he's dealing with a new situation that Jesus hadn't specifically addressed. Jesus was talking in a Jewish context to people who all accepted the authority of the Bible in principle. And Paul's realizing he's facing a new situation. And sometimes we find ourselves in a similar situation. For example, many modern technologies raise important moral questions that aren't directly addressed in the Bible because the technologies didn't exist back then.

And the way Paul addresses this issue is an example for us. He gives pastoral guidance that is deeply grounded in scriptural principles and in the scripture storyline and well aware of his particular context.

[11 : 42] All right, so that's some of the cultural context. Second, the biblical context or the theological context. I want to talk about what does this passage mean in light of the big story of scripture.

And again, the big story of scripture is God created us and everything to show his own glory. And he made us in his image. And yet we have fallen away from him because of our sin and rebellion.

We live in a fallen world and Christ has come to redeem and heal and restore all that was broken by sin. And Paul's instructions make sense within this three-part story.

So first, Paul begins by affirming God's original creational intent for marriage. Marriage is intended to reflect God's covenant faithfulness, his steadfast, unchanging love.

So if you look down in both sections, how does Paul begin? He begins by urging Christians not to divorce their spouses. Verses 10 and 11.

[12 : 46] The wife should not separate from her husband and the husband should not divorce his wife. Now, Paul is not distinguishing between separation and divorce. That distinction did not exist in ancient Corinth.

To separate meant to leave or to break off. To divorce meant to send away or release. Two different verbs, same effect. In verse 12 and 13, he uses the same verb for both husband and wife.

And notice, Paul speaks equally to both husbands and wives. And this, in his time, the culture was changing, but it was still largely husbands who initiated divorces back then.

But Paul, throughout this passage, places equal responsibility on both a husband and wife. So, Paul begins by pointing people toward God's intent that marriage be faithfully permanent till death do us part.

And in this regard, Paul is closely following Jesus' example. As we read earlier, in Mark chapter 10, you might want to turn back there. The Pharisees came to Jesus and said, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

[13 : 48] And Jesus did not immediately answer their question about if and when divorce might be permitted. He began by pointing back to God's intent in creation. Jesus said, Now, there are many other purposes that are connected with marriage.

Marriage provides a context for procreation, for having children, raising children. Marriage is a form of mutual helpfulness and companionship and friendship. Marriage is the appropriate context for sexual pleasure and a guard against sexual immorality.

In most societies, marriage conveys some practical economic benefits. But according to the Bible, the primary purpose of marriage is actually not any of those. The primary purpose of marriage in God's design is to be a picture of the intimate and exclusive and permanent union of two fundamentally different entities.

God and his people. Christ and the church. Heaven and earth. Male and female. United as one. So that's why Jesus refers back to the creation account in Genesis 2, 1 and 2.

God created humanity male and female. And he said the two shall be united and become one flesh. And that's also why marriage appears at the beginning, middle, and end of the Bible.

[15 : 36] You have the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2. And it culminates in marriage. Adam's saying to Eve, you are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.

That's an oath of loyalty. It's saying we are one body together. We are inextricably united. And in that context of exclusive commitment, it's found a safe place for emotional vulnerability and physical intimacy.

They were naked and unashamed. Marriage also appears in the middle of the Bible, in the Gospel of John. It begins with echoes of the story of creation. In the beginning was the Word.

And then at the end of chapter 1, you come to chapter 2, and Jesus' first miracle happens at a wedding in Cana. The Bible also ends in the book of Revelation.

The end of Revelation, Revelation 19, Revelation 21, is a vision of the marriage supper of the Lamb. When God and his people will be united forever.

[16 : 38] When heaven and earth are reunited. When God comes to dwell with us forever. And so marriage is very precious to God because it embodies and illustrates and bears witness to this eternal reality.

And so Jesus says, in light of all this, what God has joined together, let not man separate. If your marriage is in trouble, this is the first biblical truth you need to consider.

That God has joined you together, and so do all that is in your power to preserve and protect and deepen that union which is precious in God's sight.

Now when Paul urges Christians not to divorce, in verse 10 through 13, he's not just warning against signing a divorce decree.

The implication of his words is, don't let anything get in the way of the exclusive, intimate, persevering union into which God has called you.

[17 : 37] That's what Paul referenced in chapter 6, when he talks about the two becoming one flesh. And in verse 4 of this chapter, when he says that the wife and husband belong to one another, he's referencing that biblical vision.

So brothers and sisters, don't settle. Don't settle for staying legally married, but living parallel lives. That's what many Christians end up settling for. They'll never get a divorce, but they've given up on building and growing in their relationship with their spouse.

Don't let anger and resentment build up in your heart. Don't let conflicts smolder under the surface, unaddressed, unvoiced, unresolved.

Wives, don't complain to your girlfriends about your husband's flaws. And beware the temptation to fantasize about a different kind of man who is more sensitive or who takes more initiative.

Husbands, don't belittle your wife by dismissing her concerns and scorning her in your mind. And don't forsake her for a deceptive image on a screen.

[18 : 49] Song of Solomon says, catch the little foxes that spoil the vineyards. In other words, marriage is a garden to cultivate. Don't let it be overtaken by annoying, destructive pests.

Hebrews 3 says, let us encourage one another daily so that we are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Marriage can be hard. But it's worth investing in and it's worth persevering for.

Now maybe you're facing more serious problems. If you're being physically abused, reach out for help. Seeking to preserve your marriage does not mean tolerating ongoing violence or threats.

That's not good for you or your spouse and there are resources available to help both of you. But don't wait until it's a crisis to reach out for help. Often married couples don't seek help from a pastor or a counselor or a mature friend until one of them is already talking to the divorce lawyer.

That's like calling 911 after the fire has been blazing for hours and three quarters of the house has already burned down. And then you call 911 and then you have three or four sessions with the marriage counselor and you're disappointed that your marriage isn't singing again.

[20 : 14] Because the house has been burning down for so long. Or other times people meet with the pastor or counselor but they don't come clean about what's going on. They say, ah, we've got a little smoke damage here.

We need some help repainting. The reality is the load-bearing wall is crumbling. And the foundation is cracking. If you don't come clean with what's going on, nobody's going to be able to help you.

And it goes the other way too. If you smell smoke coming from a friend's house, if you notice some funky, weird dynamics in someone's attitude toward their spouse, don't ignore that.

Sometimes people who are really struggling don't know how to reach out for help. But they will respond if someone reaches out to them. But again, we shouldn't wait until there's a crisis.

You know, some of you, I really appreciate this. Some of you ask me, how are things going with you and Jane? And you're not just being polite and saying, how are you? Good. But you actually really want to know.

[21 : 18] And we're doing great, by the way. But this should be a normal topic of conversation. You have complete permission to ask me that question any time you want.

And if I seem to avoid it and give a vague answer, you can say, really, how are things going? That's part of how we can encourage one another. And pray for each other.

And build each other up and rejoice in the goodness of one another's marriages. Now, before we continue on, Paul addresses, in verse 12 through 16, Christians who are married to people who do not share their faith.

In particular. So let me speak to you, if that's you. Now, side note, if you're single and you want to get married, Paul says you should pursue someone who shares your faith. He makes that clear in verse 39.

But Paul's not talking to single people here. He's talking to people who are already married. Most likely one spouse had become a Christian and the other hadn't. But whatever the situation was, let me speak to you if your spouse does not share your faith.

[22 : 21] Some of the Corinthian Christians were worried that because their spouse had not yet become a Christian, that they were being spiritually contaminated by their ongoing marital union.

But in verse 14, Paul reassured them that actually the reverse is true. He says the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband.

Now, this doesn't mean that a spouse who doesn't believe in Jesus is actually saved and personally reconciled to God just because they're married to a believer. Verse 16 makes that clear.

Your spouse may come to saving faith in Christ, but that's not guaranteed. What verse 14 does mean is that because the Holy Spirit dwells in you as a believer, the Holy Spirit now dwells among your family.

Even if others in your family don't accept Christ. But as you love your spouse and love your children, they will experience the presence of Christ through you.

[23 : 35] So if you're married to a non-Christian, abide in Christ and let his presence flow through you into your home.

Now, on the one hand, don't withdraw from Christian community or disobey Christ out of fear or desire to please your spouse. In order to be filled with the Holy Spirit continually and to let the presence of Christ overflow through you, you need your brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage you and build you up.

But also, don't become so involved in ministry activities outside your home and marriage that you neglect your spouse and end up driving them away.

If your spouse is a difficult person, don't avoid them just for that reason and get involved in a bunch of other church things. And that's sometimes a temptation for new and zealous Christians.

But being a Christian should make you more committed to your marriage, not less. Even if your spouse is indifferent or resistant to the faith. Let your spouse and children see Christ in you.

[24 : 48] What does that look like? Looks like being patient and loving and persistent and forgiving. When you screw up, admit it. Ask forgiveness.

That's something that as Christians we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do. So this is where Paul begins. God's purpose in creation for marriage to be faithfully permanent.

And he encourages all of us who are married to pursue that. But Paul doesn't just point back to God's purpose in creation. Paul also recognizes the second part of the biblical story that we live in a fallen world.

And in this fallen world, divorce is a sad reality. If you look in both paragraphs in verse 11 and in verse 15, after affirming God's design for marriage to be faithfully permanent, Paul gives two but-ifs.

Verse 11, the wife should not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. Verse 15, but if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so.

[25 : 57] In such cases, the brother or sister is not enslaved. Now, what's going on here? Is Paul relativizing everything he just said about marriage, meaning meant to be faithfully permanent?

No. But Paul, as a wise pastor, is recognizing that we live in a messy and broken world. And a good pastor doesn't just loudly insist on God's unchanging moral principles.

A good pastor like Jesus comes to meet people where they are and help them take the next step toward where they need to be. That's what Christ did. He came to earth.

He came to meet us where we are in all of the mess that we're in. And he came to bring us out of it and help and bring us into God's holy presence. So once again, Paul's following Jesus' example.

When Jesus discussed marriage and divorce, he began by pointing back towards God's purpose for marriage and creation, but he also recognized the reality of divorce. If you look in Matthew chapter 19, verse 9, after reminding the Pharisees of God's purpose for marriage ever since the beginning, he mentioned one particular instance in which divorce was permitted.

[27 : 07] Whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery. Now the background to Jesus' statement is this. According to the Mosaic law in the Old Testament, adultery and other forms of extramarital sex by a married person were punishable by death.

So if the law was carried out, the adulterous spouse would be executed. The other spouse would then be released from their marriage obligations and therefore free to remarry if they so desired.

Likewise, under the new covenant, in the case of sexual unfaithfulness that violates the marriage covenant, I think Jesus is saying divorce and remarriage may be permitted even if the adulterous spouse is still alive.

Now, some people have wondered, why does Matthew include the exception clause, the exception for sexual unfaithfulness, where Mark and Luke and Paul in this passage don't explicitly include that?

And the answer to that, I think, is when the Bible states a general rule, it does not always clarify in every instance whether or not there are occasional and unusual exceptions to the rule.

[28 : 22] For example, in the Ten Commandments, it says, do not bear false witness. In other words, don't lie or deceive other people. But there are at least two instances in the Old Testament where people are commended for acting deceptively.

Rahab was commended for hiding the spies in her house and not telling the men of Jericho where they were because the men of Jericho wanted to kill them.

And the Egyptian midwives in Exodus 1 were commended for deceiving Pharaoh when Pharaoh wanted to kill the Hebrew baby boys. Now, these exceptions do not invalidate the general rule.

This is not licensed to lie and deceive whenever you feel like it. But when merciless predators are trying to kill God's people, it's okay not to tell the truth to them.

I think that's what it means. There are exceptions, but the exceptions don't overshadow the rule. And I think this is the balance we need to hold. If you read Christian writings on divorce and remarriage, there are writings that fall into both categories.

[29 : 32] I think some that fall into a harsh legalism and some that fall into a permissive license. And neither of those are healthy, and sometimes they can end up reinforcing each other, actually.

All right, back to verse Corinthians 7 and the but-ifs. Verse 11. In one case, Paul counsels a divorced person to remain unmarried or be reconciled.

The situation seems to have been some wives in Corinth wanted to divorce their husbands and marry someone else. Perhaps one or more of them had already left their husbands. And Paul is warning them specifically not to get remarried.

Now, the reason for Paul's warning goes back once again to the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 24. Turn there. Deuteronomy 24 is the most extended discussion of divorce in the Old Testament law.

It's a passage probably most of us aren't well familiar with. So that's why I want to read it. Deuteronomy 24, 1 to 4. When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, and puts it in her hand, and sends her out of the house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her, and writes her a certificate of divorce, and puts it in her hand, and sends her out of the house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord.

[31 : 15] Okay. Now, what does this mean? Among other things, it means that remarriage removes any possibility of reconciliation, marital reconciliation, with your first spouse.

If you divorce, and then remarry, you can never go back to the first spouse. Not even if the second spouse dies or divorces you.

And so Paul is speaking to followers of Christ. He's saying, if you are both followers of Christ, you should not permanently close the door to reconciliation by divorcing and remarrying.

There are means, which God has provided, to promote reconciliation among believers who have sinned against one another. And you should do all that is in your power to make use of those means, even if you're already divorced or living separately.

So Matthew 18 says, if your brother or sister sins against you, first, attempt to resolve the matter privately. Second, if that doesn't work, ask one or two others to mediate.

[32 : 20] That's where you ask for help from a mature Christian friend or a pastor or a counselor. If there's still no resolution, bring it then, Paul says, bring it to the church.

In other words, call upon the elders. And as we saw back in 1 Corinthians 5, if someone persists in unrepentant and serious sin, the church should tell that person, we can no longer recognize you as a fellow Christian because your pattern of life is so far out of line with your profession of faith.

But if that happens, we are no longer in the verse 10 and 11 situation, a marriage of two Christians. We are in verse 12 to 16, a marriage of one, of a believer and an unbeliever.

So there's the first but if, verse 11. Here's the second but if, verse 15. If the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In this case, the brother or sister is not enslaved.

So Paul's already said, verse 12, 13, if they consent to live with you, according to the covenant of marriage, you should not divorce them. But, if the unbelieving partner separates, he says, let it be so.

[33 : 32] There may come a time when you have done all that is in your power to preserve your marriage and to pursue reconciliation with your spouse.

And your spouse persistently refuses to live up to their marriage covenant. And in that case, Paul says, let it be so. Let them go.

Now you might be wondering, what exactly does that look like? How do I know whether I'm in verse 15 rather than verse 11? Well, if they divorce you and marry someone else, there is no future possibility of being reconciled in marriage to one another.

If they are sexually unfaithful and unrepentant, I think that goes back to what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 19. If they have abandoned you, definitively, persistently abandoned you or otherwise persist in violating their marriage covenant.

That's what it looks like, what verse 15 looks like. The Trinity Baptist elders paper on divorce says this, divorce is never commanded in the Bible, yet when there is repeated, unrepentant, and hard-hearted violation of the marriage covenant, divorce may be an appropriate response as a last resort.

[34 : 58] Only after attempts to resolve matters privately as well as with mediation have produced no resolution. Now, if you think you are in the situation of verse 15 rather than verse 11, let me encourage you not to make this judgment call completely on your own.

You need wise counsel and not just legal or financial counsel. many situations are far more complex and messy than I can categorize in a sermon.

And you need godly spiritual leaders who can help you sort things out and think things through. And this is part of our responsibility as the elders of the church and we take that very seriously.

And if your marriage is breaking down, you need brothers and sisters who will walk with you and pray with you and help you through the grief and anguish and anger and confusion that you may feel.

When your marriage is breaking apart, you need the family of God. And brothers and sisters in Christ, we as the body of Christ need to come alongside people who are being mistreated or who have been abandoned by an unbelieving partner just as much as we come alongside widows who are mourning the death of their spouse.

[36 : 22] Divorce is a kind of death and the grief that follows is not quickly resolved. We need to mourn with those who mourn, help those who find themselves in practical need, and care for the children involved.

Now Paul goes on to say, in this case, the brother or sister is not enslaved. In other words, if the unbelieving partner separates, you are released from your marital obligations.

You are no longer obligated to pursue reconciliation because the implication is you have done all that you can. You have engaged in a process and there has been a definitive ongoing violation of the marriage covenant.

And therefore, I think verse 15 means you are also free to remarry. Now, some Christians believe that remarriage is always sinful unless your first spouse has died.

On the basis of verse 15, especially comparing it to verse 11, where Paul seems to be giving different counsel and different situations, and on the basis of other reasons, I think that view is wrong.

[37 : 35] At the same time, remarriage should not be entered into hastily. After a divorce, just as after a death of a spouse, you need time to grieve and heal.

You may also need extended time to reflect and repent of the ways that you contributed to the failure of the marriage before you consider starting a new one. And as Paul will emphasize later in this chapter, you may be called to remain single like Paul, and that's not at all a bad thing.

So, we've seen God's creational intent for marriage to be faithfully permanent. We've seen Paul speaking to the complex realities of living in a fallen world.

But finally, the Bible points us to the redemption and healing that comes through Christ. Now, maybe you hear all this and you think, I've really blown it.

I've really messed up in my marriage. I've caused a lot of the problems that we're having. Maybe you're still reeling from the rejection of a divorce. You're wrestling with bitterness, cynicism.

[38 : 46] You feel alone and beaten down. Maybe you remarried when you hadn't completed the process of pursuing reconciliation with a former spouse.

Maybe you can't fix what went wrong in the past. If you've remarried, you need to remain faithful to the marriage you are in now. But the good news is Christ came and Christ died to bring redemption and healing and hope for the future through his death and resurrection.

Now, I want to conclude by sharing two scriptures that were shared with me this week by people in this church who have been divorced as I was talking with them about preparing for this sermon.

One person shared with me Ephesians 5, 11 to 14, which says, Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

When anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible. For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says, Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

[40 : 01] This person said, We need to expose our marriages to the light. Admit to the issues that are wrong, and let the light of Christ shine in so we can be transformed.

The church is called to expose sin, to call it what it is, and then help the victim and the victimizer move toward reconciliation and resurrection. You see, sin never goes away when it's hiding in the darkness.

But when we bring our sin, whether it's past or present, into the light of Christ, there's a promise of healing and resurrection life. Paul says, Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead.

Yes, you can rise from the dead in Christ when his light shines upon you when you come into his light. Second verse that someone else shared with me is Psalm 13, 5-6, which says, I have trusted in your steadfast love and my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord because he has dealt bountifully with me. If you've been betrayed or abandoned, you need to know that you have a God who will never give up on you, who will never stop loving you, who will never forsake you, who will always keep his promises and who loves and cherishes you as his beloved son or daughter, who sings over you as that verse in Zephaniah said, who rejoices over you with singing.

[41 : 40] In Jesus Christ, you have a spouse. You have a God who has become bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, who has made marriage vows to you and poured out his life on the cross to prove his love and loyalty and faithfulness to you.

He is the one you can lean on when no one else is there. He is the one who hears your cries in the middle of the night and his steadfast love can give you renewed joy even after your world has been torn apart.

That's what we've sung about this morning. The deep, deep love of Jesus. Great is your faithfulness.

Morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed, your hand has provided. Great is your faithfulness, Lord, unto me. Amen. If you're not a Christian, isn't this the kind of love that we all long for?

The steadfast love of Christ. Turn to him and he will be yours and you will be his now and forever. Let's pray. Amen. Father, we thank you for your great and unending faithfulness, for your steadfast love, for your forgiveness, for our sin and failure, for the resurrection life that you have poured out upon us through the power of your Holy Spirit.

[43 : 41] Lord, we pray that we would abide in you, that your presence would dwell in us and among us. Lord, that we would experience your redemption and healing so that we might display your steadfast love in our marriage, marriages, or in our singleness.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your sweet presence and for your steadfast love.

Amen. Well, please stand as the music and thank you for your thyme for your otrasproducts, but just one punish that cose were that you should it be just to have as if a that you have so have