

Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 85- Divorce and Remarriage

Sunday AM-October 11, 2026

Executive Summary

This briefing document analyzes biblical teachings on marriage, divorce, and the impact of the Fall, based on Matthew Lesson 85 ("The Sermon on the Mount: Divorce and Remarriage," Matthew 5:31–32). God designed marriage to be a permanent, unbreakable union where a husband and wife become one for life. Old Testament passages—specifically Malachi 2 and Genesis 1–3—demonstrate that God explicitly hates divorce and views it as a damaging act resulting from human sin.

The entry of sin into the world shattered the original perfection of marriage. In Genesis 3:16, the consequences of the Fall introduced conflict between husbands and wives, often described as "the battle of the sexes." Key Hebrew terms from the text, such as *mashal* (rule) and *teshuqah* (desire), reveal that sin created a struggle where women desire to usurp authority and men attempt to oppressively rule. Crucially, the text emphasizes that proper, loving leadership and unity in marriage can only be fully restored through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Main Themes and Detailed Analysis

1. God's Design for Marriage and His Stance on Divorce

The foundational truth of biblical marriage is its uniqueness and permanence. God designed marriage as a lifelong covenant where two people become one, never to violate that oneness in thought or action.

Evidence from Malachi 2

In Malachi 2:13–16, God presents a strong indictment against the people of Israel for violating the marriage covenant:

- **Rejection of Hypocritical Worship:** The Israelites came to God's altar weeping and crying, yet God rejected their offerings and worship (Malachi 2:13).
- **Treachery Against Wives:** God rejected their worship because the men had acted treacherously toward the "wife of their youth." They were divorcing their faithful Jewish wives to marry pagan women (Malachi 2:14).
- **The Wife as a Companion:** Malachi 2:14 states that a wife is a man's "companion And your wife by covenant." The word "companion" describes a close friend. This is the only passage in the Old Testament where this specific word is used to describe a wife, showing that a wife is meant to be a person's closest friend.
- **God Hates Divorce:** In Malachi 2:16, God states directly: "For the LORD, God of Israel, says that He hates divorce."

- **A Garment Covered in Violence:** Malachi 2:16 notes that divorce "covers one's garment with violence." This vivid picture describes gross sin. It is compared to a murderer caught with the victim's blood splattered on his robe, or a person getting mud all over their clothes. The sin of divorce leaves a spiritual stain on the person who commits it.

Malachi 2:13–16 13 "And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands." 14 "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant." 15 "But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth." 16 "For the LORD, God of Israel, says that He hates divorce. 'For it covers one's garment with violence,' Says the LORD of hosts. 'Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.'"

Divorce is not part of God's original design; it is a direct result of sin, the Fall, and the curse.

2. Marriage Before and After the Fall (Genesis 1–3)

To understand why divorce and marital conflict exist, one must examine the origin of human sin in Genesis.

[Original Design: Genesis 1]

- Loving headship & submissiveness
- Shared dominion over creation

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[The Fall: Genesis 3]

- Sin enters human relationships
- Threefold separation: God, Nature, Spouse

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[Post-Fall Reality: Curse]

- Conflict for control ("Battle of the Sexes")
- Oppressive rule vs. usurping desire

The Ideal Before the Fall

Before sin entered the world, marriage was pure and harmonious:

- **Loving Headship:** The husband provided loving, caring leadership and protection.
- **Loving Submissiveness:** The wife served as a devoted helpmate, submissive to her husband's caring leadership.
- **Shared Dominion:** According to Genesis 1:27–28, man and woman ruled over creation together.

Genesis 1:27–28 27 "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." 28 "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

The Curse After the Fall

When Adam and Eve sinned, the curse brought a threefold separation:

1. Separation between man and God.
2. Separation between man and nature.
3. Separation between husband and wife.

Genesis 3:16–18 16 To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." 17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life." 18 "Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field."

3. Key Language Analysis: The "Battle of the Sexes"

Genesis 3:16 contains two critical phrases that explain why struggle exists in human marriages.

- **Understanding Mashal (Rule):**
 - The statement "he shall rule over you" uses the original language term mashal.
 - It means to rule, reign, or be placed in an elevated office of authority.
 - This is a completely different concept from the word used for ruling over creation in Genesis 1:28.

- Because of sin, man was placed in an authoritative position to subdue and control. Without the grace of God, this authoritative rule can lead to male chauvinism and abusive behavior.
- **Understanding Teshuqah (Desire):**
 - The statement "Your desire shall be for your husband" uses the original language term *teshuqah*.
 - This term does not refer to physical or emotional attraction.
 - The only other occurrence of this word in the early biblical text is 15 verses later in Genesis 4:7, where God warns Cain that "sin desires you, but you must rule over it." In that context, sin wanted to control and dominate Cain.
 - Therefore, *teshuqah* in Genesis 3:16 means that the woman will have a sinful desire to usurp authority and control her husband.
- **The Resulting Conflict:**
 - The curse established an ongoing struggle where the woman seeks to dominate her husband, and the husband seeks to suppress and rule over his wife. This dynamic is the root cause of chaos and divorce in human homes.

4. Restoration in Christ and Church Applications

Restoration Through the Gospel

Human effort cannot fix the brokenness caused by the Fall. Only through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit can proper leadership, mutual respect, and loving oneness be restored in a marriage (as taught in Ephesians 5).

The transcript outlines the essential components of salvation and the Christian response:

- **The Call to Salvation:** Requires fearing hell, exercising humility (acknowledging human helplessness), repenting to be rescued and forgiven, believing the Gospel, accepting the Lord, and placing burdens in the "Burden Box."
- **Church Elements:** Emphasizes ordinances and practices including Baptism, church membership, prayer, the altar, the Lord's Supper, and understanding "Why He Must Return."

Original Language Terms Analysis

The source context includes specific original language terms from the Hebrew Old Testament text to explain the dynamics of the Fall in Genesis 3:16. No Greek words were

used in the source transcript. The table below details the original language terms provided in the source context.

Original Word	Language	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition & Source Context Usage
Mashal	Hebrew	mah-SHAHL	To rule, reign, or hold an elevated office of authority. Refers to the husband's post-Fall authority to rule over his wife.[1]
Teshuqah	Hebrew	tesh-oo-KAH	A strong desire to control, dominate, or usurp authority. Used in Genesis 3:16 for the woman's desire toward her husband, parallel to sin's desire to dominate Cain in Genesis 4:7.[2]

Footnotes:

[1] Mashal: Used in Genesis 3:16 to denote a new dimension of positional authority given to man after the Fall. The text notes this is distinct from the rule over nature in Genesis 1:28 and can lead to chauvinism or oppression apart from Christ.

[2] Teshuqah: Used in Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7. It defines the ongoing struggle in marriage where the woman seeks to take authority, resulting in marital discord.