

Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 86-Divorce and Remarriage

Sunday AM-October 18, 2026

Executive Summary

This briefing document synthesizes the core themes, scriptural analysis, and community updates presented in the sermon "Sermon on the Mount - 'Divorce and Remarriage' (Lesson Number 86)." The central message addresses the sacred nature of Christian marriage, contrasting human culture's permissive view of divorce with God's divine design.

Key takeaways include:

- **Marriage as a Divine Model:** Marriage is divinely ordained to reflect the permanent relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. Because Christ's commitment to the Church is eternal, marriage is intended to be lifelong.
- **Misinterpretation of Old Testament Law:** The Pharisees incorrectly interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1–4 as a command allowing quick divorce for trivial matters. In reality, God hates divorce. Moses permitted certificates of divorce solely to protect women from slander and mistreatment due to human sinfulness ("hardness of heart").
- **Linguistic Structure of Deuteronomy 24:** A precise reading of the original text shows a series of conditional statements (protasis) restricting mistreatment, rather than a direct command (apodosis) granting a right to divorce.
- **Grace Over Dismissal:** While sexual immorality is recognized as a ground where divorce occurs, scripture repeatedly emphasizes forgiveness, mercy, and reconciliation over legal separation.

Main Themes and Detailed Examination

1. The Divine Perspective vs. Human Dimension of Marriage

Modern society often approaches marriage from a strictly human dimension, treating it as a standard legal contract. However, Biblical teaching requires a divine perspective:

- **Analogy of Christ and the Church:** Marriage serves as a visible symbol defining the relationship between Jesus Christ and believers.
- **Permanence:** Just as Christ's covenant with the Church is permanent, marriage is designed to be enduring.
- **Scriptural Foundation:**
 - Ephesians 5:22–25: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."
 - Ephesians 5:31–32: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

2. Scribes, Pharisees, and Rabbinic Traditions

During the time of Christ, the prevailing teaching among the scribes and Pharisees allowed men to divorce their wives for virtually any reason—ranging from minor household mistakes to personal preference—so long as legal paperwork was provided.

- **Pharisaical View:** Permitted easy separation, creating an ancient form of "no-fault divorce."
- **Scriptural Correction:** In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus directly corrected these legalistic traditions:
 - Matthew 5:31–32: "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

3. Proper Interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1–4

The sermon provides a detailed analysis of Old Testament law to demonstrate that God never invented, commanded, or prescribed divorce:

- **Hardness of Heart:** Jesus clarified in Matthew 19:8 that "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."
- **Purpose of the Certificate:** The certificate of divorce was introduced by Moses as a regulatory protection for women in a fallen world:
 1. It served as a legal testimony that the woman was free from marital obligations, protecting her from false accusations of being a harlot.
 2. It provided evidence allowing her legal freedom to remarry.
 3. It guarded her against slander.
- **Linguistic Breakdown:** Deuteronomy 24:1–4 is composed of multiple conditional ("if") clauses rather than a blanket permission. Moses used these conditions to prevent a divorced woman from being defiled or mistreated, rather than endorsing the act of divorce itself.

4. Reconciliation, Grace, and the Option of Mercy

Even in situations involving marital unfaithfulness, divorce is not presented as an absolute mandate:

- **Biblical Examples of Forgiveness:**
 - **Hosea:** Remained faithful to and reclaimed his adulterous wife.
 - **God and Israel:** God showed enduring patience to an unfaithful nation.
 - **Joseph and Mary:** In Matthew 1, Joseph demonstrated grace when he sought to handle Mary's situation quietly rather than subjecting her to public disgrace or harsh penalty.
- **Social Impact:** Unbiblical divorce causes severe harm to families, children, and broader society. Forgiveness and restoration remain God's highest desire.

Community Announcements and Global Missions

The sermon context included several local church ministry updates and global outreach efforts:

- **Operation Christmas Child (OCC):** Collecting shoe box gifts containing clothing, sandals/flip-flops, socks (ages 2–14), small toys, tools, water bottles, and backpacks. Boxes can also be built online.
- **New Life Kids Harvest Festival:** Scheduled for October 28th. Requires 30 to 35 volunteers to serve approximately 70 children. Individually bagged cookies and brownies (4 per bag, strict no-nut/peanut butter policy) are requested.
- **Global Missions Update:** Missionaries Galen and John Coner reported from Senegal, Africa—a predominantly Muslim nation. They requested prayer support for local believers to stand firm in faith and fear God rather than man.
- **Additional Ministries:**
 - **Elders Meeting:** Scheduled for Monday at 6:00 PM.
 - **Youth & Family Events:** Team trivia night at First Baptist; fundraiser for Intended Hope at the VFW; New Life Women's Fellowship featuring a personal safety awareness specialist.

Key Quotes

The following quotes from the speaker have been edited for clarity and readability while preserving their exact meaning:

1. **On the Picture of Marriage:**

"Marriage is a symbol that defines for us in visible terms the relationship between Christ and His Church. Is the relationship between Christ and His Church permanent? Yes. Then it is demonstrably significant that marriage be permanent if, in fact, it is to reveal to us the truth about Christ and His Church."

1. **On God's View of Divorce:**

"God hates divorce. You will not go into the Bible and find a section where God says, 'If you do this wrong, write her a bill of divorcement and you can be divorced.' God never said that. The writing of divorcement was not designed, prescribed, or commanded by God."

1. **On the Cultural Misuse of Scripture:**

"In Jesus's time, the prevailing view was that you could divorce your wife for anything. If she burned the food or went around without her veil, you could divorce her, as long as you did the proper paperwork. That is equivalent to what we call 'no-fault divorce' today."

1. **On Forgiveness Over Separation:**

"Technically, where there is adultery, divorce happens. But that is not to say it is required or that God endorses it. God's solution is always love and forgiveness. If both individuals get right with the Lord, the marriage can be made right too."

Greek Terminology Guide

The table below outlines the specific Greek grammatical terms referenced during the sermon's exegesis of Deuteronomy 24 and Matthew 5.[^1]

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition	Textual Context / Usage
Protasis [^2]	proh-TAY-sis	A conditional clause or minor premise in a sentence (typically an "if" clause).	Used in Deuteronomy 24:1–3 to set up a series of conditions ("If a man takes a wife... and if she finds no favor...").
Apodosis [^3]	uh-PAHD-uh-sis	The main clause or conclusion of a conditional sentence (typically a "then" clause).	The actual conclusion in Deuteronomy 24, which does not appear until verse 4, proving the passage is a restriction rather than a command.

[^1]: Greek linguistic terms were introduced to explain the structure of Biblical conditional statements regarding Old Testament law. [^2]: **Protasis** (πρωτασις): The clause expressing the condition in a conditional sentence. [^3]: **Apodosis** (αποδοσις): The clause expressing the consequence or result in a conditional sentence (transcribed phonetically as apoptosis in the sermon context).