

## Luke 16:16-18: Overcoming Marriage Struggles

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The Gospel of Luke / Luke 16:16–18

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### Introduction

- Little differences in marriage irritate you... I don't like to wear shoes in the house - the way I was brought up. Poop shoes in the closet - didn't feel like cleaning them - Should have put them outside. Staci reminded me.
- The little struggles in marriage. We all experience them. The things about your spouse that annoy you. The way he doesn't put up the dishes. The way she always wants to talk while you're watching the football game. Little differences we laugh about and learn to deal with.
- BUT... for some of us the challenges are far greater than the minor struggles we face from day to day.
- For some, your spouse has severely wounded you. The things she has said about you has rocked you to your core. The pain he has put you through has been debilitating.
- Marriage is not what you expected. The vows you made on your wedding day seem empty.
- Why is your marriage such a struggle? Is there any hope?
- This passage - the only reference in Luke's Gospel to Jesus' teaching on marriage, and it's only one verse! Matthew and Mark give us a more extended teaching of Jesus on marriage ([Matthew 19:1-12](#); [Mark 10:2-12](#)).

- Jesus' reference to marriage in [Luke 16:18](#) is actually a statement made in reference to a larger issue that Jesus is teaching about. BUT... it's a helpful statement. I want these verses to help us think well about marriage, and if you are struggling in your marriage, I want to give you hope this morning.
- Three reasons why we struggle in our marriages and how we can overcome those struggles.

## Jesus' Teaching

- First glance, seems like these verses are out of place. Jesus just told the story of a dishonest manager, and vs. 19, story of a rich man who ignores a poor man. In the middle of these two parables, a teaching about the law and marriage? AND... doesn't seem like the teaching on marriage is connected at all. A random insertion by Luke?
- BUT... it's not random at all. Jesus addressing the Pharisees. Just called them out for their love of money (vs. 15). They justified themselves. How? Scrupulous law keeping - experts in the commands of God. Highly revered by people - BUT - God knew their hearts.
- vs. 16 - Pharisees focused on Law keeping, but it's a new day. The Law and Prophets were until John. (John is the last prophet. He's a transitional figure bringing an end to the era of the Old Covenant and introducing the New Covenant as he prepares the way of the Lord.)
- In Jesus - a new day - the Kingdom of God is present. The King is on the earth, and Jesus is the King who has come to bring good news - salvation is available to all NOT through law keeping but through faith in what Jesus has done. URGENCY - now is the time to enter the Kingdom of God. Favor with God is not a matter of Law keeping but a matter of grace.

- vs. 17 - Yet, at the same time, while it's a new day, it doesn't mean that the Old Testament Law and Prophets are done away with. Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and Prophets ([Matthew 5:17](#)).
- **What was the purpose of the OT Law?** NOT to give us a rulebook, but to show us the character of God, what He desires from His people, our inability to live to His standard, and our need for a Savior.
- Law shows us that God is holy, and He expects us to live holy as well. Yet, we can't. We constantly fail to live up to His standard. **Essence of Law** = love God with all your heart and love neighbor as yourself. We fail! BUT, Jesus doesn't. He comes and lives out the essence of the Law for us. He loves the Father, and He loves us. He obeys where we can't and goes to the cross in our place. Great exchange - He dies for our rebellion, we receive His righteousness.
- BUT vs. 18? Vs. 18 is an EXAMPLE of the failure of the religious elite. Thought they were such good law keepers, but their view of marriage showed they were not. They didn't even keep the ESSENCE of the law in their own marriages. In the days of Jesus, argument about divorce based off bad interpretation of [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#) - Moses gives instructions about divorce if a woman becomes "displeasing" to her husband.
- Some took this phrase to mean divorce was allowable in any circumstance (Hillel) - didn't like the way dinner was cooked, the way your wife dressed, etc. Others, only in the case of adultery (Shammai).
- What does Jesus say? HARD WORDS - Everyone who divorces and marries another woman commits adultery. The Pharisees had minimized the significance of the most sacred earthly relationship that God created - [GEN. 2](#) - A one-flesh relationship. A relationship that Paul describes in [Ephesians 5](#) as a picture of the Gospel. (We have a tendency to minimize the significance of marriage as well).

- [Ephesians 5](#) - The way a man loves his wife a picture of Jesus' love for the church, and the way a woman follows the leadership of her husband a picture of how the church follows the leadership of Jesus.
- Marriage = a covenant - a promise/commitment of two people to live as one for life as an illustration of the Gospel. To break that covenant is to completely disregard what God wants to accomplish in your marriage. AND its calls into question your understanding of God's covenant love with you - do you understand the Gospel? Do you understand that God loves you flaws and all, and do you understand how the Gospel impacts all your relationships, even your marriage? If willing to break a covenant with one-flesh relationship,
- Could have a long conversation about divorce/remarriage/adultery - BUT [Malachi 2:16](#) - God HATES divorce. NOT His design. Bottom line, with exception of infidelity ([Matt. 5:31-32](#)) or abandonment ([1 Cor. 7:15](#)), to divorce is sinful - to divorce and remarry - to break a covenant that you made before God. God takes that seriously. Rather than divorce and remarry - God desires that you reconcile the marriage you are in now - to do everything possible to make it right.
- Simply put, if you are married, even if it's a struggle, God wants you to be faithful to the vows you made to your spouse.
- Beauty of following Jesus - because of the New Covenant - Jesus lives within you, and He empowers you to live out your one-flesh marriage in a way that honors Him IF you are are willing to submit to His design.
- Why do we struggle in marriage? 3 reasons why we struggle:

## You have a hard time understanding God's plan for your marriage.

- **Embrace a God-centered marriage.** [Gen. 2](#)- a one-flesh, covenant relationship that displays the Gospel through the way you live out your

marriage. Original intention in [Gen. 2](#) - marriage a complementary relationship - two people living for God's Kingdom together - being fruitful and multiplying - making disciples of their children and others together.

- **Reject a me-centered marriage.** Biggest problem in your marriage is selfishness. “What can my spouse do for me?” vs. “How can I glorify God by being a blessing to my spouse?” Two selfish people will always struggle, while two selfless people will bless each other. When selfish:
  - **You put unrealistic expectations on your spouse.** (e.g., my spouse is the source of my ultimate fulfillment, happiness, etc. OR, because we are one flesh, he should be able to read my mind, sex life should be perfect, we should like all the same things, he should do whatever it takes to make me happy.)
  - **You make your spouse your idol.** Anything you expect to bring you complete fulfillment other than God is an idol - something you have made a god. Very unfair to make spouse the source of all your fulfillment and happiness because your spouse is far from perfect and will constantly let you down if you look to your spouse as your ultimate source of fulfillment.
  - What you should expect of your spouse: to faithfully follow Jesus. If your spouse is faithfully following Jesus, it will change everything about your marriage.

## **You have a hard time understanding God's plan for your spouse.**

- God's plan for your spouse is not your happiness/fulfillment/complete you, etc. God's plan for your spouse is that your spouse grow in Christlikeness. God's plan for you is for you to join Him in His work of sanctifying your spouse ([Ephesians 5:25-26](#)).

- You can grow in holiness without being married, but something about marriage that helps you grow in Christ. In marriage, you learn selflessness, how to serve, patience, humility, etc.
- **How can I help my spouse grow in Christ?**
  - **Pray for your spouse's spiritual growth.**
  - **Encourage spiritual growth in your spouse.** (Husbands... You need to take the lead on this. What can you do together? Pray together, attend small group together, talk about the sermon together, serve together, etc.)
  - **Affirm the work of God you see in your spouse.** We're quick to point out flaws, slow to speak words that affirm. (Eph. 4:29 a great verse for your marriage.)
- **How do I discourage my spouse's growth in Christ?**
  - **Ignore your own sin.** Could be that your sin has caused bitterness, anger, etc. in your spouse.
  - **Constantly nag.** "Better to live on the corner of a roof than to share a house with a nagging wife" (Proverbs 21:9). Nagging = persistent fault finding or continuous urging. Some of you nag your spouse about the things of God rather than encourage. You manipulate with guilt rather than pray and affirm.
  - **Fail to make your marriage a priority.** Focus so much on your kids, their needs, and their problems that you lose focus on your relationship with your spouse. Kids need to see Christ-centered marriage. Focus on job, etc.

# You have a hard time submitting to God's plan for your marriage.

- God's way isn't easy, but it's best! If you're struggling, it's likely that pride, hard-heartedness, lack of forgiveness, bitterness, and stubbornness have become embedded into your marriage. For some of you, divorce sounds like a great option. Stop! That's not what God desires.
- If you are struggling, how do you begin to submit to God's plan for your marriage?
  - **Ask God for help** - Believe that He has the power to fix what you and your spouse has broken. If you are willing to submit to God, there's hope.
  - **Confess** - You need to confess to each other that you've missed the mark. Past time for honest conversation.
  - **Stop blaming** - Stop blaming your spouse for all the problems in your marriage. Instead
  - **Forgive** - Time to get past the hurt. It's time to seek forgiveness for the hurt that you have caused each other. You look like Christ when you offer forgiveness.
  - **Get outside help** - A marriage mentor - who's a third party that can encourage you, help you think biblically and objectively about your struggles.
  - **Remember the Gospel** - The Gospel is what redeems your life and your marriage. Jesus died and rose again to save you from your sins, and to give your marriage purpose and meaning. Maybe for you, it's placing your faith in Jesus for the first time. Or, it's a renewed commitment to living out the Gospel in your marriage - Christ at the center instead of you at the center.

