



## The Controversial Exception Clause

Last week we began looking at divorce as seen through the eyes of Jesus. This is imperative as the numbers of divorce in our culture skyrocket, including those professing to be disciples of Christ. We know that the word tells us God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16); the Law of Moses included a permission statement to provide a ‘writing of divorce’ for any indecency; and also that this was not God’s intent for man and wife from the beginning.

However, there seems to be an allowance given by Jesus as a permissible cause for divorce, but any diligent study of what this allowance means reveals a multitude of possibilities. There is one that fits nearly every situation, and one can find support for most any divorce. One particular commentary has five full pages of information on this one verse. But what does Jesus mean in Matthew 19:9? With all the possible scenarios being presented by theologians, can we even possibly know what Jesus meant? Apparently those disciples of Jesus, who heard His words, understood what He meant in spite of being ‘uneducated and untrained men’ (Acts 4:13). Their words, “If the relationship between the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry”, certainly acknowledges some form of understanding. Whatever it was, they believed the ability to divorce was so restrictive they would hardly be able to do so and as a result state it would be preferable to remain single.

Each interpreted proposal of what Jesus meant presents problems including adultery alone, a hidden pre-marital sexual relationship; even one proposal that tended to indicate that there was actually no exception at all. This is somewhat consistent with Jesus telling them that divorce from the beginning was not in God’s design for marriage. If this is the case, it would explain the disciples’ incredulity over Jesus’ statement. As I stand on the sidelines observing all the scholars’ studies and conclude that it would be our best interest to not get caught up in the divorce epidemic, I also need to consider those who have already fallen victim. To them I share the words of King David, “A broken and contrite spirit God will not despise.”(Psalm 51:17) Bring that to God and forgiveness will be yours.