

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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Would you take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 19. We're going to be talking about family faithfulness, keeping love alive. I asked Joyce, "Will you love me, Joyce, when I'm old and unattractive?" She said, "Of course I do!" Ha, ha. We want to keep love alive. You know, there's something very sad in today's world and what it is, is this; we have so many who have what I call just throw-away marriages. It just doesn't work out, so they just throw it away! As somebody said, "They get married as an ideal. Then that ideal turns to an ordeal, and then they're looking around for a new deal." That's sad, that's sad.

I can remember when families really were traditional. I came from a traditional family, I married a girl who came from a traditional family, mothers took care of the home, fathers went off to work, we ate our meals together, we went to church together, we fussed together, we played together, we were a traditional family. That's not true anymore. The typical family in America, in the typical family, both husband and wife work. And millions of households have not a father and mother, but a single parent. And experts tell us, in the coming years half of all children will grow up in homes with a single parent and most mothers will work outside the home.

Now, a lot of this is caused by divorce and I was read in *Newsweek Magazine*, listen to this. "The landscape is littered with victims of the divorce epidemic." Notice this is not some Baptist preacher, but it's *Newsweek* talking about a divorce epidemic. "Ex-wives raising their children alone, former husbands trying to start new lives and still be good fathers to kids they see only on specified days, and the children themselves often torn between two warring parents." *Newsweek* went on to say about a study of sixty divorced middle class families in northern California. There was a psychologist, her name is Judith Wallerstein, and she found out of these sixty couples, only 10% of the ex-spouses said they had succeeded in improving their lives. Only 10% said, "This divorce made things better." And then she went on to say, Wallerstein says this, "Divorce is seen as a wrenching experience for every family I have seen." And of course we know that the devastating effect on the children, broken homes produce broken lives which produce broken homes which produce broken lives, and on and on it goes. No wonder God says in the book of Malachi chapter 2 and verse 16, "I hate divorce." That's what God says, God says, "I hate it."

Now we have the sophisticated, the intellectuals of today, who'll tell us, "Well, we've come way past, Adrian, what you believe in and what you Christians believe in." So we're being told today that sex between unmarried couples is normal and acceptable; we're told that homosexuality is just an alternate lifestyle; we're told that unmarried motherhood has no great shame to it; we're told that marriage is not sacred because nothing is sacred. And the only law today in America, the chief code in America is, "Don't be judgmental." That's the way we live today.

Well, let's see what God's Word has to say. Matthew chapter 19, beginning in verse 1 through verse 9, "And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee and came into the coast of Judea beyond Jordan, and great multitudes followed Him and He healed them. And the Pharisees also came unto Him,

tempting Him,” that means testing Him, “and saying unto Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?’” That is, if she’s not attractive or if she cannot cook or if she has mismanaged the finances, or if she’s irritable, can I just put her away? “And He answered and said unto them, ‘Have ye not read,’” and by the way, Jesus expects you to read the Bible, my friend, “‘Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female.’” And let me say this; one of the most damning things today that the devil has done is to blur the distinction between male and female. “He made them male and female and said, ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they twain,’” that is, they two, “‘shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.’” They say unto Him, ‘Why did Moses, then, command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away?’ He saith unto them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you,’” or allowed you, “‘to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so, and I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication,’” that means sexual immorality, “‘and shall marry another committeth adultery, and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.’”

Well, I’m going to stop reading right there for a moment and I want to lay some things on your heart because I think in America today, somebodies need to speak up and say a word about family faithfulness. We need this more than I can possibly say.

Now there’re three things I want to lay on your heart this morning, and I pray God that He will write them indelibly upon your heart. The first thing I want you to understand is that **marriage is made by Heaven**, marriage is made by Heaven. Look if you will in Matthew 19 verses 4 and 5, “‘Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female and said, ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they twain shall be one flesh.’” Now marriage did not come from sociology. It did not come from the primordial ooze of evolution. Marriage is not some cultural innovation, marriage is made by Heaven. It is God’s plan. Now if you could take the best carpenter in the world and give him the assignment to build a house, but if that carpenter doesn’t know what a house is, there’s no way he can build it. No matter how good a carpenter he is. You can take the best people in the world and say, “Build a home,” but if they don’t know what a home and a family is according to God, there’s no way possible that they can build it because they have no guide.

Now God gives us the guide here, and in all marriage problems and all marriage counseling it’s all built around three words here, three verbs. Number one is the one “leave,” look at it, “For this cause,” Matthew 19 verse 5, “shall a man leave his father and mother,” underscore that, “and shall cleave,” underscore that, and then finally, “and they shall be one flesh,” underscore one, “they shall be one flesh.” And there it is: leave, cleave, be one. That’s what marriage is; you leave and you cleave. Now when God says you are **to leave**, listen to me, that speaks of **the priority of marriage**. Now if you’re making notes, write that down. Leave speaks of the priority of marriage. Do

you know what your task is as a parent? Your task as a parent is to get your children ready to leave the nest.

The Bible uses this idiom in Deuteronomy 32:11, “As an eagle stirs her nest.” You know what the eagle does? It has the little eaglet there in the nest and it has a nice place there, the mother has lined it somewhat softly with feathers and other bark and leaves and that eaglet there is up there high on that crag in that nest and the mother is bringing the little eaglet a mouse and a nice juicy worm and everything is fine. But there comes a time when that mother knows that little eaglet has to fly, it has to leave the nest, and so she begins to go in there and beat that little bird with her wings and flap over that bird and get it up on the precipice, and finally push it over, and it begins to fall and tumble and scream and screech. And finally it stretches its little wings and catches the wind, and if it looks like it's going to fall, she'll just sweep under it, catch it on her wings, bear it up on her wings and bring it back into the nest, but what she's doing is teaching that little bird to fly. That's the same thing you do with your children. You're going to have to teach them to leave the nest.

And you know what my responsibility has been as a father and your responsibility is, if you still have children in your home, is really to work yourself out of a job. I am successful when my children no longer need me. You are successful as a mother when your children no longer need you. Now it's against, it's against human nature to want to work yourself out of a job. You know why we have children to begin with? I'm not talking about biologically; I'm just talking about what the emotional need is. We have a need-to-be-needed. God built that into us. We have a need-to-be-needed. We want somebody to depend upon us, so we have a need-to-be-needed, and so the love that you have for your child is that need-to-be-needed.

When your baby is born, you look down at that baby, you've never met them before, you don't know anything about them, but you love them, right? You love them. That is called need-to-be-needed love. And then the little baby loves mother. Now does she love mother because mother is charming, because mother is beautiful, because mother is so intelligent or has a good sense of humor? No, the baby needs mother and so the baby has need love and the mother has need-to-be-needed love, so you take need-to-be-needed love and need love and there is a bonding.

And so there comes a time, however, when mother is not needed as much as she wants to be needed. There comes a time when a child will grow up and reach a particular age where they don't need mother to make every decision and to fuss over them and to care for them and to guide them and say, “You must do this and you can't do that.” That's normal, that's natural, that's the point we're trying to bring them to, when they no longer need mother, they no longer need father, they can get out in this world and operate on their own. As Jesus said in Matthew 19:5, “*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife.*” But sometimes a mother who needs-to-be-needed, at that point, will begin to create artificial needs to keep that child tied to the apron strings. Why? Because she needs-to-be-needed. And what will the child do? The child is trying to untie those needs because he has

needs to be an individual of himself, and so he's trying to break free and what do parents sometimes do? They say, "You are a rebellious child." A child may not be rebellious at that point, but it can turn into rebellion if the parents don't understand that there is a legitimate need-to-be-needed time, and there is a legitimate need time, but there also comes a legitimate time when that little eagle has to learn how to fly, isn't that right? And that's very hard, for us to work ourselves out of a job like that.

But let me tell you something. When they get to a certain age they're like a bar of soap. If you squeeze them too hard, they'll pop out of your hand. But you hold them gently, and you understand when that right time is, and you learn this while you work yourself out of a job, you don't work yourself out of a relationship. And when you let them go as children, they will come back as friends, and they will be the best friends you've ever had. I'll tell you, I'd rather be with my family than be with you, I'll tell you the truth, I really had. But I want to tell you something, there's something about your family, as they come back and they come back as friends, it is absolutely wonderful when we learn what God has said, "*That for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife.*"

Now, sometimes we talk about mother-in-law problems? You know what mother-in-law problems often is, and especially if it's the mother of the groom that causes the problem so many times, it's two women in love with the same man. I mean, she is trying to control him. She still wants him to be her little boy and the daughter-in-law says, "Hey, he's my husband," and that's where that problem comes from. And, so don't commit emotional incest. Let them go! Now, listen to me. Marriage in physical relationships is the supreme commitment. You are to honor your parents, but your parents are not your supreme commitment. "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother.*" You are to love your children, but your children are not the supreme commitment. Mate to mate is a stronger commitment than children to parents and parents to children. Now we better learn that. "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother.*"

Listen, business is not your supreme commitment. Some of you businessmen are sacrificing your family upon the altar of your business, and the corporation is just moving people around, and so often that is the cause of great distress. A man sacrifices his family for the corporation. In my estimation, a man is not a success when he has a divorce at 28 and also at 31 and a cardiac at 45. Everybody says, "But look what he did, what a success he is." To me he's not necessarily a success.

Now look, first of all, "To, to leave," that is what, the priority of marriage. Now secondly, watch, "*And to cleave,*" Matthew 19:5, to cleave, that is **the permanence of marriage**. The word cleave means to weld or to glue. When you get married, friend, it is a lifetime contract, not an optional one. You show me two kids who consider divorce as an option, and I'll show you a family that has a great potential for disintegration. You show me people who do not consider divorce as an option, and I'll show you a family that will hang together and stay together. Listen to me, those

families who stick it out and those who don't have basically the same kinds of problems. They have basically the same kinds of problems. There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them. If we would learn to attack the problem rather than one another, we could work it out.

You see, he says that we're to leave, that's the priority of marriage, leave father and mother. We are to cleave! That is the permanence of marriage. It literally means, I say, to weld or to glue. And then he says in Matthew 19 verse 5, "*We are to be **one flesh.***" That is **the purpose of marriage**, the purpose of marriage. "*We're to one, be one flesh.*" Now it's talking about more than sexual union. When you got married, you married a whole person, body, soul, and spirit. And see, you're no longer an individual, you become one flesh. God's arithmetic is one plus one equals one. That's God's arithmetic. Marriage is a romance in which both the hero and the heroine die in the first chapter, and a new person comes into being and that new person is one flesh.

Now, we're to be one flesh physically, and sex is not dirty or impure. It is a wonderful gift of God. Hollywood has made sex dirty. Somebody asked, "Can you remember when the air was clean and sex wasn't dirty?" Sex is a gift of God. When God says in Exodus 20 verse 14, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery,*" when God says in First Corinthians 6 verse 18, "*Flee fornication,*" when God says in Hebrews 13:4, "*Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled, but adulterers and whoremongers God will judge,*" God is not trying to keep us from sex, God is trying to keep sex for us. It is God's gift, and so God has put some high walls to protect it and to preserve it. It's God's wonderful gift so that a husband and wife can know one another in the most intimate of relationships. As a matter of fact, when husband and wife would have this relationship in the Bible, the Bible would say they, "*Knew one another*". It's a way of saying, "I love you" that cannot be put into words. And the devil has tried to take this which is so wonderful and beautiful and to trivialize it.

Do you know what gives me a great heartache today? People will say, "Well, it's only about sex, it's only about sex." Do you see what this says to the minds of our children? Do you see how that trivializes the whole thing? You know what they're saying? "That's not an important thing. That's not an important thing." My dear friend, listen to me, that is so radically, fundamentally, indispensably important. Read your Bible. See what God is saying. What has happened to us? Read the Ten Commandments one more time.

No, what is the purpose of marriage? That we might be one flesh physically, that we might be one flesh emotionally. Not only should we be sweethearts, we ought to be friends. My best friend, I said, was Bob. No, you've slipped down another totem. My best friend is Jesus, and my next best friend's still come behind my best friend who's Joyce. She's my friend, she's a friend. She is my lover, she is my sweetheart, but she is my friend because we are one flesh physically, we're one flesh emotionally, and we are one flesh spiritually, because we love the same Lord, we're members of the same body, His body.

Now friend, that's what God wants for marriage is that wonderful unity. And so Jesus says, "Here's what marriage is, marriage is made in Heaven." He gives us, dear friend, the purpose of marriage. He gives to us, dear friends, the very essence of what marriage is.

But now here's the second thing I want you to look at with me today. I want you to see that not only is marriage made by Heaven, but **marriage can be marred by hell**. Marriage may be marred by hell. Look if you will in Matthew 19 verses 1 to 3, "*And it came to pass that when Jesus had finished these sayings, He departed from Galilee and came to the coast of Judea beyond Jordan, and great multitudes followed Him and He healed them. The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him and saying unto Him, 'Is it lawful for man to put away his wife for every cause?'*" That is, just as I said, we're going to be looking for a new deal. Go on down to verse 7 through 9, Jesus said, "*They say unto Him, 'Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away?' He saith unto them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your heart suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication and shall marry another committeth adultery and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.'*"

Now, God desires that marriage be a permanent union. The only reason that Jesus allowed divorce was for immorality, for fornication. Put in your margin Matthew 5 verses 31 and 32. Jesus said, "*It hath been said, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife let him give her a writing of divorcement, but I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife except or saving for the cause of fornication causeth her to commit adultery, and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.'*" Now, let's look at this very carefully here. Moses permitted divorce; he never commanded divorce. Jesus said, "*From the beginning it was not so,*" this is not God's original intent. A marriage may be broken by the continual marital unfaithfulness of one of the partners. The word fornication is the Greek word *pornea* and it means sexual impurity. But even when a husband or a wife has been unfaithful and committed adultery, does that mean that a divorce is called for? No. Reconciliation and forgiveness is called for to put the family back together in spite of that, to forgive, to restore, to replace, and it can be done.

Read the book of Hosea, the first few verses of chapters 1 and 3. Hosea the prophet had a wife whose name was Gomer. She finally became a prostitute; she got down to the very depths, to the dregs. Hosea went and found her, bought her from the slave market, restored her, forgave her, and took her back to be his wife.

Now God does allow divorce for marital infidelity, but even if possible, and sometimes it's not possible, but what we try to do even when that happens here at the church is to restore that relationship with forgiveness and grace, and it becomes what I call a super glue marriage. You know what the super glue is? It's stronger

where it's put back together than it was before it was broken. That can happen, that can happen.

We have so many, however, trivial excuses for divorce in today's world. For example, people say, "Well, the love has gone out of our marriage." I've actually had men come speak to me, say, "I want to divorce my wife," and I say, "Well, why?" And he says, "Well, I don't love her anymore." Well, he doesn't get a lot of encouragement from me, because the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25, "*Husbands, love your wives.*" That's not a suggestion, that's a command. Behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry it out. Women are to love their husbands. The Bible says in Titus 2 verse 4, "*That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands.*" We're commanded to love.

Now part of the problem is the world's definition of love and our definition of love. Let me ask you guys a question. When you were dating, looking around for a girlfriend and you knew, you were just kind of looking around the field there, what were you looking for? You won't kid me, I know what you're looking for; you're looking for a looker. You were looking for somebody that was attractive physically. You might have also been looking for somebody who was cute, somebody who was funny, somebody who had a good sense of humor, that meant they laughed at your jokes, somebody who was popular, a face and a body. That's what you were looking for, and your heart began to, you know, bump, bump, bump, bump, bump, and you finally got close to her, and finally got in that situation, and you leaned over and you whispered in her ear something like this, "I love you, I love you." But you know, what you really meant, is, "I want you." The world calls that love, but you see, that kind of love is very conditional. And a person who's loved that way and that way only is going to feel very insecure, because, I mean, she might, when she was 18, look this way, but when she's 40, it's this way. And he might have been so handsome, but now he's kind of bald and bulgy, and you think about it. Now, friend, if we love people because of this attractiveness, you know what's going to happen? When the attractiveness changes, that kind of love is conditional love, and that's the reason we have so many people who get divorced, because they have an emotional, conditional love. A man loves a woman like he loves a sweet orange, he takes a plug out, squeezes the juice out of it and says, "There's nothing else left for me," and throws it on the ground like a piece of garbage. He loves because of what he can get out of it.

Now when the Bible says, "*Husbands, love your wives,*" in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25, it uses another kind of a word for love. It is the word *agape*, *agape* love. That's the kind of love that Christ has for the church, and it is a non-conditional love. Did you know that God loves you unconditionally? And did you know that's the way you're to love your mate? Unconditionally.

You see, if your mate feels that you do not love them unconditionally, you know what's going to happen? This is why we have so many divorces. The very first thing that's going to be in a person's mind is fear. You know, "I've got to perform, I've got to keep the house a certain way, I've got to look a certain way, I've got to lose a

certain number of pounds, I've got to do this, I've got to do that, because if I don't, I may lose him, I may lose her." So there's a fear there. And then when that divorce comes, what happens? Guilt. "I didn't live up, I wasn't good enough, I didn't perform enough, and so I did not, I was not acceptable to my mate." And so somehow we feel guilt.

And then after a while that guilt turns to what? Anger. Say, "Now wait a minute, he had no right to do this," and that anger says, "I was used, and now I am discarded." And then that anger turns to bitterness. And bitterness is a living hell. And lots of people have gone through just that kind of a thing, because all of that is built on conditional love. The kind of love that the Bible teaches is an unconditional love, and when you know that you're loved unconditionally, rather than fear, there is peace. And rather than guilt, there is security. And rather than bitterness, there is joy.

We have to learn to love as Jesus loved, and that's the reason it takes Christ to make a marriage, because, friend, you don't have that kind of agape love. That is not a human product. The Bible says in Romans 5:5, "*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*" And when we learn to love unconditionally, we don't have to listen to the devil's lies. We have so many of these lies today. You know, we think that love is some sort of an emotional experience and, "Well, I love you because you make me feel good." Is it Gary Smalley that said that, "Some people treat marriage like a tick treats a dog; they're only on that dog for what they can get out of it." The problem in marriage is, there're two ticks and no dog. We're trying to make somebody else satisfy and meet our needs. It's basically selfish. Now, nothing wrong with romantic love. But friend, romantic love is not enough.

I just want to get to the third point because I just want to put it in your heart and your mind. I'm going to leave a lot of stuff out about this kind of love. Marriage, marriage is made in Heaven. Marriage may be marred by hell. But **marriage is always marked by hope**. Now I want you to see this. Look at this if you will. God gives you hope in your home, even if you've been divorced, even if you cannot get remarried or whatever the situation, and I believe there are legitimate times for a person to be remarried. But no matter where you are, whether your home seems to be a living hell, whether you've been deserted, no matter what, listen to me; divorce is not the unpardonable sin. It is not a dead-end street, and if you've been divorced, you are not a second-class citizen. There's something called the grace of God. And we need to hold that up in the church. Forgiveness is always available. The Bible says in Romans 8:1, "*There's no condemnation for those who're in Christ Jesus.*" The Bible says in First John 1:7, "*The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.*" The Bible says in Isaiah 1:18, "*Thou your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.*" The church is not a showcase for saints. If you think I've brought you in here to make you feel bad because Satan has hurt you, you're wrong. We're here as a church to minister to you.

I remember reading in the Bible about a woman taken in adultery. John chapter 8 verses 1 through 11, men were saying, "Stone her," and Jesus said, "Woman, where

are your accusers?” “Isn’t anybody accusing you?” She said, “No, Lord.” He said, “Nor do I. Go and sin no more.” I remember reading about the woman at the well in John chapter 4. She had had five husbands. She became an evangelist that led the entire city of Samaria to Christ. God used her mightily. God doesn’t hold grudges.

Put this Scripture down, First Corinthians 6 verses 9 through 10, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers, nor effeminate,*” that means homosexual, “*nor abusers of themselves with mankind nor thieves nor covetous nor drunkards nor revilers nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God.*” Put it down big, plain, and straight: if that’s your lifestyle, that’s the lifestyle you embrace, you need to get saved. You will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But now notice First Corinthians 6 verse 11. I love this, “*And such were some of you.*” He did not say, “*And such are some of you,*” “*And such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Isn’t that wonderful? If you’re in Christ Jesus, you’re a new creature. And I don’t care what has happened in the past, marriages that are made in Heaven and marred by hell are marked by hope, and He is the God of grace and the God of forgiveness.

And there’re many wonderful people who’ve come out of broken homes and children, families, and heartaches and tears. We’re here as a church to help and not to hurt, to lift and not to push down further. And we’re here for you, and we want you to know this. Yes, divorce is wrong, and I want to save our kids in this church from it, and so here’s a precipice, a cliff, and we don’t want them to fall over, so we’re going to build a wall up here as high as we can. But down in the valley we’re also going to put an ambulance to help those who have fallen over. We’re going to make sure there’s gas in it.

But friend, listen to me. If you are married, you make certain that Christ is the head of your home. If your marriage is not a Christian marriage, give your hearts to Jesus Christ, because the devil is working against it.

Number two, if you’re married, continue to feed your love day by day. Don’t take it for granted.

Number three, if you’re divorced, ask God for forgiveness if it was your fault. If you were divorced because of someone else’s wrongdoing, forgive in your heart, and don’t let bitterness carry you away.

Next, remember that your godly home can perhaps be the greatest testimony you’ll have in this world. And if you’re unmarried, I beg you kids, you marry only in the Lord and build a Christian home.

A home is the sweetest place on earth, the nearest place to Heaven. It’s the only part of the Garden of Eden that we have left.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you're not certain that you're saved, would you like to be saved, would you? Would you like to know that you really do have life? Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life." Could I lead you in a prayer? We'll call this prayer the sinner's prayer. And you can pray and accept Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. You can do it right now. Would you pray this prayer? "Dear God, I know that You love me. Thank You for loving me. And I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me and You promised to save me if I would trust You. Jesus, I do trust You. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe you paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Come into my life. Take control of my life and begin today to make me the person You want me to be. And Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, Amen."