**Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 88-Sermon on the Mount – "Divorce and Remarriage"**

**Sunday AM-November 1, 2026**

Executive Summary

This briefing document synthesizes the key themes, biblical interpretations, and community announcements from the sermon "Divorce and Remarriage" (Sermon on the Mount, Lesson 88).

The primary focus of the address is Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5:31–32 regarding divorce and remarriage. The sermon contrasts the low legal standards of the scribes and Pharisees with God's higher ideal established at creation. Key takeaways include:

- **The Pharisaic Error:** The religious leaders of Jesus's day misinterpreted Deuteronomy 24:1–4. They used civil statutes to justify divorcing their wives for trivial reasons, which led to widespread adultery.
- **God's Ideal vs. Civil Law:** God never commanded or approved of divorce. He allowed civil regulations as a concession for human sinfulness. God's original ideal is a permanent, lifelong union where two people become one flesh.
- **The Cause of Adultery:** Divorcing a spouse for any reason other than sexual immorality creates a chain reaction of adultery when the divorced parties remarry.
- **Redemption Over Dissolution:** The Old Testament story of Hosea and Gomer demonstrates God's true heart: forgiving and restoring a broken marriage rather than seeking a divorce.
- **Grace and Forgiveness:** Though divorce creates spiritual harm, full forgiveness and healing are available through Jesus Christ, who commands believers to move forward and "sin no more."

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Community and Church Life Updates

Before addressing the core theological topic, the service outlined several key community updates, events, and announcements:

- **Harvest Fest Success:** The community event welcomed over 60 children, including 55 church attendees and 10 to 12 local community children.
- **Care Ministry:** A meal train was organized for the Cesolini family following a recent surgery for Sunshine Cesolini.
- **Civic Engagement:** Attendees were encouraged to participate in upcoming local and national elections.
- **Birthdays and Anniversaries:**
    - Birthdays: John Conser, Alvin Gladysh, Sherry Compton, Maddie, Johnny McCormack, Patty Tompkins, Leanna Rayos, and Elmer Simpson.

- Anniversaries: Tom and Ashley Van Wart, as well as Dylan and Caroline Fancher (celebrating their first anniversary).

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Theological Framework: God's Ideal vs. Human Law

A central theme of the sermon is the distinction between human civil law and God's spiritual ideal.

GOD'S CREATION IDEAL

(Permanent Lifelong Union)

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| HUMAN CIVIL CONCESSIONS |

| • Mosaic Law Statutes: Recognized human hardness of heart (Deut 24:1–4). |

| • Pharisaic Degradation: Lowered standards to allow no-fault style divorce. |

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JESUS'S RESTORATION

(Matthew 5:31–32 / 19:6)

The Standard of the Sermon on the Mount

Throughout Matthew 5, Jesus addresses the internal spirit of the law rather than just external behavior. He shows that meeting a low legal requirement does not make a person righteous before God:

- **On Murder:** The Mosaic law prohibited physical murder. Jesus teaches that heart-level hatred violates God's ideal (Matthew 5:21–22).
- **On Adultery:** The Mosaic law prohibited physical adultery. Jesus teaches that looking at someone with lust is adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:27–28).
- **On Divorce:** The Mosaic law allowed a certificate of divorce. Jesus teaches that divorcing without biblical cause violates God's creation ideal (Matthew 5:31–32).

Marriage as a Creation Institution

Marriage was created by God at the beginning of human history. Because God designed the institution, every marriage—whether between believers or non-believers—is viewed by God as a binding union.

The ideal established in Genesis is that two people become one flesh, a bond that human beings should not separate.

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Detailed Examination of Matthew 5:31–32 and Deuteronomy 24

The Pharisaic Misinterpretation

During the New Testament era, Jewish leaders taught that a man could divorce his wife for almost any complaint, including minor issues such as being obnoxious or burning food. They believed that issuing a formal "certificate of divorce" made the act completely righteous.

Jesus directly challenged this view, stating that their widespread use of divorce did not make them righteous; instead, it made them guilty of spreading adultery throughout their community.

Clarifying Deuteronomy 24:1–4

The sermon highlighted that God never commanded, approved, or sanctioned divorce in the Old Testament. Key Old Testament passages mentioning divorce include Deuteronomy 22:19, 29, Leviticus 21:7, 14, Isaiah 50:1, and Jeremiah 3:1.

In Deuteronomy 24:1–4, the law addressed a situation where a man divorced his wife due to an improper cause. The passage served as a restriction, not an endorsement:

- Under original Old Testament law, sexual immorality (adultery) was punished by physical death, which ended the marriage.
- Over time, society stopped enforcing the death penalty, replacing it with certificates of divorce.
- When men began divorcing their wives for reasons less than adultery, they forced those innocent spouses into situations where remarriage resulted in technical adultery.
- Deuteronomy 24 instructed that a first husband could never reclaim his former wife if she had remarried another man, as she had been defiled. The law was intended to stop hasty, lighthearted divorces.

Scripture Analysis and Comparison

Jesus explicitly defined the narrow biblical boundary regarding divorce:

“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.” — Matthew 5:31–32

Parallel teachings across the Gospels emphasize the absolute permanence of marriage:

- **Mark 10:11:** So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.”

- **Luke 16:18:** “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.”
- **Matthew 19:6:** “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Worship readings during the service also pointed to the spiritual freedom provided by Christ's work on the cross:

- **Colossians 2:14:** "...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

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Biblical Alternatives and Restoration

The Example of Hosea

Rather than using conflict or unfaithfulness as an immediate reason for divorce, the sermon pointed to the Old Testament book of Hosea. God commanded the prophet Hosea to forgive and buy back his unfaithful wife, Gomer. Hosea’s actions represent God's heart toward human beings: choosing redemption and forgiveness over separation.

Grace for Past Failures

While the sermon presents a strict view of God's ideal for marriage, it emphasizes that God provides complete grace and forgiveness for past sins, including unbiblical divorces.

Just as Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more, believers affected by divorce are not condemned. They are called to accept God's forgiveness, follow His ideal moving forward, and live in spiritual freedom.

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Greek Vocabulary and Pronunciation Guide

The following table details the specific Greek term referenced during the exposition of Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9 regarding the indissolubility of marriage:

| Greek Word | Transliteration | Phonetic Pronunciation | Brief Definition |
|---|---|---|---|
| **χωρίζω / χωριζέτω** | Chorizo / Chorizeto[^1] | **khō-reed'-zō / khō-rid'-ze-tō** | To separate, divide, put asunder, or create distance between entities that have been joined together. |

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[^1]: **Footnote:** In Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9, the phrase "let not man separate" uses a form of the Greek verb **χωρίζω** (chorizo). The sermon explicitly noted the phonetic similarity between this Greek word and the common culinary term chorizo, using the memory aid to emphasize that human beings must not tear apart what God has joined into a single union.