

Family: Distinct and Obedient

Deut 6:3-9; Matt 19:3-9
SS Lesson for 04/26/2026

Devotional Scriptures: Gen 2:19-25

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: Deut 6:6-7

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

RECEIVING THE LAW (DEUT 6:3-9)

Blessing for obedience (3)

- Obedience that is better because it delights God (1 Sam 15:22)
- Obedience leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)
- Obedience leads to the praise of God by others (2 Cor 9:13)
- Obedience keeps us remaining in God's love (John 15:10)
- Obedience leads to the reward of blessings (Deut. 28:1-6)
- Obedience brings the reward of freedom (James 1:25)

Right response to the Law (4-5)

- Response of love through obedience (1 John 5:3)
- Response of love knowing that all things work together for the good (Rom 8:28)
- Response of love so that we will fear God, walk in His ways and to serve Him (Deut 10:12)
- Response of love because we are one of His saints (Ps 31:23)
- Response of love so that we will seek Him (Prov 8:17)

Internal acceptance (6)

- Acceptance of the Word as the actual Word of God (1 Thess 2:13)
- Acceptance of the Word as truth, believing in it and being sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13)
- Acceptance of the Word which makes one wise for salvation (2 Tim 3:15)

External teaching and actions (7-9)

- Teaching to live godly and pass on to next generation (Deut 4:9)
- Teaching to fear the Lord (Deut 6:1-2)
- Teaching about the praiseworthy deeds of God (Ps 78:4-6)

APPLYING THE LAW (MATT 19:3-9)

Lawfulness testing (3)

- Testing by asking for signs (Matt 16:1)
- Testing about obedience to man's laws (Matt 22:16-18)
- Testing about the Law (Matt 22:35-36)
- Testing Jesus' integrity (Mark 12:13-14)
- Testing Jesus' words to trap Him (Luke 11:53-54)

Lawfulness based on scriptures (4-6)

- Scripture is God breathed (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- Scripture written by men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21)
- Scripture revealed to man through the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12)
- Scriptures that are the very words of God (Rom 3:1-2)
- Scripture written to teach and provide hope (Rom 15:4)
- Scripture spoken through Jesus and His words (Heb 1:1-2)

Lawfulness clarified (7-9)

- Clarified because God brings everything to light (1 Cor 4:5)
- Clarified because God knows what's in a man (John 2:24-25)
- Clarified because God sees our circumstances before they happen (Gen 16:13)
- Clarified because God sees everywhere and knows all things (Prov 15:3)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM ALLEN ROSS

I The Divine Plan for Marriage (19:3-6).

II. The Permission to Divorce (19:7-9)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Deuteronomy has been described as a “farewell speech.” The people of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land. Although Moses had led them since their freedom from Egypt, they were to enter a land forbidden to Moses (Deuteronomy 3:25-27). Even on the eve of his death, Moses prepared the people to move on without him. Deuteronomy begins with a summary of the people’s journey to that point in the text (1:1-4:43) before shifting into a list of laws and commandments (4:44-28:68), the renewal of the covenant (29:1-30:20), and then the final deeds and death of Moses (31:1-34:12). Many of the laws and commandments found in this middle section of Deuteronomy, where our passage occurs, are similar to the earlier books in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible). But specific commandments are worth repeating on the eve of Israel’s transition. The second passage in today’s lesson, Matthew 19:3-9, describes proper application of the Law of Moses. By the time of Jesus, some 15 centuries had passed since the Law of Moses was given. But people still had questions regarding its application. Various branches of first-century Judaism, particularly the Pharisees and the Sadducees, regularly debated the interpretation of the Law of Moses. This situation is no different: Jesus is challenged to provide his interpretation of a particular subject in the Law of Moses. The sparring partners here are Pharisees, but the Pharisees were not a united front

Key Verse: Deut 6:6-7

6 And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Receiving the Law (Deut 6:3-9)

- 3 Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'
- 4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!
- 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.
- 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.
- 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.
- 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
- 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Blessing for obedience (3)

Obedience that is better because it delights God (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Obedience leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience leads to the praise of God by others (2 Cor 9:13)

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Obedience keeps us remaining in God's love (John 15:10)

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Obedience leads to the reward of blessings (Deut. 28:1-6)

1 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: 3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. 4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock, the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. 5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. 6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

Obedience brings the reward of freedom (James 1:25)

25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

Right response to the Law (4-5)

Response of love through obedience (1 John 5:3)

3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

Response of love knowing that all things work together for the good (Rom 8:28)

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Response of love so that we will fear God, walk in His ways and to serve Him (Deut 10:12)

12 And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Response of love because we are one of His saints (Ps 31:23)

23 Love the Lord, all his saints! The Lord preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.

Response of love so that we will seek Him (Prov 8:17)

17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.

Internal acceptance (6)

Acceptance of the Word as the actual Word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Acceptance of the Word as truth, believing in it and being sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13)

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Acceptance of the Word which makes one wise for salvation (2 Tim 3:15)

15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

External teaching and actions (7-9)

Teaching to live godly and pass on to next generation (Deut 4:9)

9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.

Teaching to fear the Lord (Deut 6:1-2)

6 These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.

Teaching about the praiseworthy deeds of God (Ps 78:4-6)

4 We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. 5 He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, 6 so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

Applying the Law (Matt 19:3-9)

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'

5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Lawfulness testing (3)

Testing by asking for signs (Matt 16:1)

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

Testing about obedience to man's laws (Matt 22:16-18)

16 They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. "Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. 17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" 18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?"

Testing about the Law (Matt 22:35-36)

35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Testing Jesus' integrity (Mark 12:13-14)

13 Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. 14 They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

Testing Jesus' words to trap Him (Luke 11:53-54)

53 When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, 54 waiting to catch him in something he might say.

Lawfulness based on scriptures (4-6)

Scripture is God breathed (2 Tim 3:16-17)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Scripture written by men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21)

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Scripture revealed to man through the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12)

12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Scriptures that are the very words of God (Rom 3:1-2)

1 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? 2 Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

Scripture written to teach and provide hope (Rom 15:4)

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Scripture spoken through Jesus and His words (Heb 1:1-2)

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

Lawfulness clarified (7-9)

Clarified because God brings everything to light (1 Cor 4:5)

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

Clarified because God knows what's in a man (John 2:24-25)

24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. 25 He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

Clarified because God sees our circumstances before they happen (Gen 16:13)

13 She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

Clarified because God sees everywhere and knows all things (Prov 15:3)

3 The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Allen Ross

I The Divine Plan for Marriage (19:3-6).

The first section of the passage then records Jesus' answer to the Pharisees' question about divorce. There is the question in verse 3, and the answer in verses 4-6.

A. Question: Is it lawful to divorce for any and every reason? This question comes from the Pharisees as a test, and that is no surprise because throughout the book they are seen challenging Jesus. The Pharisees, you may recall, were not what we would call clergy, but were devout religious men who sought to guide the people in obedience to the Law of Moses. They believed in the elements of the historic faith, resurrection, angels, and miracles; and they stressed ritual purity, tithing, and separation. As a result they were very legalistic and therefore hypocritical as well. They were deeply troubled by Jesus at first, but then many of them became hardened against him and sought to destroy him. Not all Pharisees were this way, but apparently those in power were. They were shrewd in their dealings, and fully capable of bringing an innocent sounding question to Jesus that had hidden traps.

Here they raise the age-old question about divorce to test him. They wanted to see how he would answer the question, to see if he would say something that would ruin his reputation before the people by contradicting Moses, or even involve him in the Herod-Herodias affair so that he too might be arrested and taken away from them. They hoped that Jesus would quickly lose favor with the people.

The question is about the legality of divorce in general, but it is worded to reflect current debates: "for any and every reason." The phrase refers to the major debate in Judaism over divorce between the famous teachers Hillel and Shammai, and their disciples. Both these schools permitted divorce, but for different reasons; and both based their teachings on the same verse of the Bible. Deuteronomy 24:1 ruled that divorce was permissible for "some unseemly thing." The latter expression in Hebrew is literally "the nakedness of a thing" [*erwat dabar*]. Shammai and his students emphasized the first word, the nakedness, and said the divorce was only for indecency. They did not all agree on what that indecency might be, because the word "nakedness" can be a broad term, or can figuratively refer to many things. It probably referred to any profane and lewd conduct or life style that was ruining the marriage. It would not refer to adultery, for the punishment there was death, not divorce. Shammai also permitted remarriage when the divorce did not correspond to their own rules of conduct.

On the other hand, Hillel and his followers took a more lenient view of the reason for divorce; they focused on the word "thing" and said divorce could be granted for almost anything. They had limits, but they allowed divorce for a number of reasons.³ And so the question was one that the Pharisees had been debating for some time, to no resolution, and they decided this was a good question to use to test Jesus. The background of their debates explains why they ask "for any and every reason." There were clearly teachers who permitted divorce for almost any reason.

B. Answer: Divorce is out of harmony with the divine will (vv. 4-6). Jesus' answer does not line up with the loose interpretation of Hillel or the more strict view of Shammai exactly. But Jesus did restrict divorce to sexual misconduct.

Jesus refers to Scripture to make his case, as did the prophet Malachi before him (Mal. 2:10-16). Jesus quoted Genesis 1:17 to affirm that God made male and female with the implication that they would be joined together, and then he quoted Genesis 2:24 to remind everyone that the two would be one flesh. Genesis explained, "For this reason, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh." The word "flesh" in the Old Testament passage does not just mean sexual union, but a union of their lives--their hopes, dreams, ambitions, plans, and sexual activity. They would become one in every sense; and to destroy that ruined more than a sexual union. Thus, in every marriage, the unity of man and woman is a re-enactment of the design of God for creation. Jesus draws the conclusion from this that if God joined the two together, they are one by God's will. Divorce, then, goes contrary to the design of the creator, and is to be considered the sin of rebellion because it tears apart what God was putting together.

The principles that Jesus laid down here cannot be lost in the endless discussions of situations and circumstances of divorce. First, marriage is sacred because God ordained the unity of the couple, the man and the woman, as one flesh. Second, because marriage is grounded in creation it cannot be defined merely in the terms of the marriage agreement a man and a woman make. Some might argue that when two get married they make a covenant, and then if the covenant promises are broken the marriage can legitimately be dissolved. It may be dissolved, of course, but if it is still violates the will of God. What this passage will teach is that we must recognize marriage for what it is--the plan of the creator to unite a man and a woman together as one flesh; and we therefore must recognize divorce for what it is--either rebellion against or failure to fulfill the will of God, not a violation of the agreement two humans made.

II. The Permission to Divorce (19:7-9)

A. Question: Why then was divorce permitted? (v. 7). The Pharisees then come back with a follow-up question: if divorce is a violation of the will of the creator, then why did Moses permit it? They word it this way: “Why did Moses command that a man give his wife a bill of divorce and send her away?” But a careful reading of Deuteronomy 24:1 shows that Moses did not command them to divorce, but allowed for it for some “indecent thing.” Moses actually ruled that if a man married, and the woman did not find favor in his sight, and he divorced her, and her second husband did the same thing, then she could not return to the first husband.⁵ So in the discussion in Deuteronomy, divorce and remarriage are presupposed for the ruling about marrying the first husband again. In other words, divorce and remarriage were allowed, but not commanded. The pious would seek ways to restore the marriage, but if it did not work, then there was permission to divorce.

B. Answer: Divorce is evidence of sin (vv. 8, 9). Matthew’s account of this interchange differs slightly from the way that Mark reports it (10:2-9). Matthew is more interested in the ideas that are being offered than in who said what first. Both Matthew and Mark present the clear teaching of Jesus that divorce did not reflect the true plan of creation but the hardness of the human heart. Moses permitted divorce because it is preferred over sinful indecency. The fact that a divorce was granted did not specify that the one divorcing the guilty partner was committing a sin, but rather that it was evidence that sin had already taken place and was destroying the marriage. Divorce was not, and is not, a God-ordained, morally neutral option; it is evidence of sin and of hardness of heart (=refusal to obey).

But what is the “indecent thing” that is the reason for dissolving a marriage? We already noted that it would not be adultery, for the normal punishment for adultery was death (Deut. 22:22). Adultery was the destruction of a marriage--in other words, it usually involved sexual intercourse with someone married to someone else. Whether they actually put adulterers to death is beside the point--the law would not legislate a different punishment here for it. Here divorce is the permitted action for the indecent thing.⁶ In Deuteronomy the “nakedness of a thing” would have referred to any lewd, immoral behavior that made a mockery of the marriage. For such things divorce was allowed--but not commanded.

Jesus summarizes the law with an exception clause: “except for marital unfaithfulness” (NIV).⁷ The word that he uses is Greek *porneia*. It is usually translated “fornication.” The term was used for all kinds of lewd and immoral acts, such as prostitution, homosexuality, public indecency, and the like. So Jesus is making the ruling in Moses more specific; he agrees with Moses that divorce is permitted because of the hardness of heart, but he affirms that it may only be granted on the grounds of sexual sins (*porneia* seems to refer to sexual sins persisted in, that is, the guilty party has chosen a perverse form of conduct or life-style and is not concerned about preserving the sanctity of the marriage). If sexual unity in marriage was the plan of the creator, then sexual promiscuity is not in harmony with it. It may not necessitate divorce (depending on the way the couple can work it out), but permission for divorce under such circumstances was in harmony with the will of the creator to make sure that the marriages were pure. Divorce was the lesser of the two problems.

Thus, Jesus is very clear here: there is no divorce permitted if the grounds for that divorce are extended beyond what the law allowed, divorce based on sexual violation of the marriage. In summary, then, Jesus and Moses permitted divorce if one party (or both) were involved in immoral, indecent conduct that made a mockery out of the marriage. In such cases if there was no chance of repentance and change, divorce was permitted. It would still be a failure to fulfill the will of God, and so the divorced person, even if considered the innocent party, would have to own that failure before finding a new start with God’s blessing.

This is why Jesus explains that the repercussions are severe: anyone who divorces his wife for any illegitimate reason and marries another commits adultery. In other words, the legitimate grounds for divorce would dissolve the marriage because the indecency had already occurred. But if the divorce is for other reasons, then the sexual union in the remarriage is the indecency that destroys God’s plan for marriage.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/27-questions-about-marriage-and-divorce-matthew-193-12>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Christians are called to receive and apply God's will. If we are to be distinct in the world—as families and as individuals—we must be marked by faithful obedience. Central to this is acknowledging that a whole-person love of God is the most fundamental part of the Christian life, even as it was to believers under the old covenant. It should undergird all thoughts and animate every action that a believer takes. One example of exhibiting such love for God is to submit to his desires as they relate to marriage. It is not just in matters of marriage that one's love for God can be displayed, however. The commandment "Love the Lord your God" can and should manifest in every decision and action in the life of a Christian. Love for God can look like obeying God's wishes for human life as expressed in the Bible and especially in the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God himself. As we faithfully receive and live out God's law, we must remember that it is not for us alone. We are to spur one another on and instruct younger believers growing up in the faith (Hebrews 10:24). Human nature inclines away from God and toward its own desires. We must receive God's law—and establish external reminders of this commitment so as to combat human forgetfulness—so that it dwells in our hearts and forms our actions to live in alignment with it.