

Finally, something
better than the same.

“In It For The Long Haul”

Fully Changed – Part 2

#fullychangedrcc

March 8, 2020

Good morning (**Podcast; RCC APP – Today Tab >>> Message Notes; Guests & Explorers**)!
Fully Alive – ‘I came so that everyone would have **life**, and have it in its **fullest**.’ John 10:10
(CEV); **Called, Convinced, Changed & Committed**. Enemy: Steal, Kill & Destroy – Marriage ...
Are you in it for the long haul? PIC, promise, VOWS.

*Do you David take Amie to be your wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish as long as you both shall live? I, David, take you Amie to be my wife. I commit my life to you embracing all joys and sorrows, all triumphs and hardships. I make this commitment in Love. I keep it in Faith. I live it in Joy, eternally forever more. With this ring I thee wed. This ring symbolizes the unending union of my life with yours and with all that I am and all that I have I honor you. Your dreams are now my dreams, your hopes are my hopes, your fears are my concerns, your affection is my joy, your love is my blessing. – **STAND ... Jesus Changing Culture***

“Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan (*where John the Baptist had been*). Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he **taught** them. Some **Pharisees** came and **tested** him (*trap – Why did John get put in prison, and finally lose his head? For criticizing Herod Antipas for marrying his brother’s wife*) by asking, **‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’** ‘What did Moses command you?’ he replied. They said, ‘Moses **permitted** a man to write a **certificate of divorce** and send her away.’ ‘It was because your **hearts were hard** that Moses wrote you this law,’ Jesus replied. ‘But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them **male** and **female**.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’ When they were in the house again (*privately – focused on Herodias*), the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.’”

Mark 10:1–12 (NIV) – **Note Roman Audience**

“Some Pharisees came to him to **test** him. They asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for **any and every reason** (*any cause*)?’” Matthew 19:3 (NIV) – **Note Jewish Audience**

The religious leaders are inviting Jesus into one of the most hotly contested debates of His time in Judaism. There were **two primary perspectives** regarding divorce in Jewish thought. The Jews in Jesus’ day believed that there were **four grounds for divorce**. And they were all based on the **breaking of the vows** that people made ...

1. Neglecting to provide food.
2. Neglecting to provide clothing.
3. Neglecting to provide marital love.
4. Committing adultery.

The first three are based on **CASE LAW** in Exodus 21:10-11 that allowed the victim of abuse or neglect to be freed from the marriage. The last one is one of the ten commandments.

“If a man marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.” Exodus 21:10-11 (NIV)

Exodus 21:10-11 describe what is known as case law, not statute law, which means that the principles are more important than the details. Then as now, some laws were written as “statutes,” summarizing a whole subject area (such as divorce), while other laws were “case law.”

Case law is a collection of decisions made by judges in actual cases that established a new legal principle. These rulings can then be applied to other cases that share something in common with the case that established the principle. Exodus 21:10-11 is case law so we look for the principles that apply to all marriages that involve neglect.

The rabbis found the following principles in this text ... They reasoned that if a *slave* wife had the right to divorce a husband who neglected to supply food, clothing and marital love, then a *free* wife would certainly also have this right. And they argued that if one of two wives had this right, so did an *only* wife. Furthermore, if a *wife* had these rights, then a *husband* was also entitled to divorce a wife who neglected him.

The biblical principle that was established, therefore, was the right of someone to divorce their partner if they neglected their vow to provide food, clothing or marital love.

The OT provided very sensible laws about divorce. Each partner had to keep his or her four marriage vows to feed, clothe, share marital love and be faithful. The principles behind these vows were that they had to supply material support (food and clothing) and physical affection (marital love). Abusive situations were covered by these laws, because physical abuse and emotional abuse are *extreme forms* of neglecting material support and physical affection.

Rabbi Hillel – lived a few decades before Jesus, developed the **“Any Cause”** divorce (4 + whatever else based on Deut. 24:1). Very soon the “Any Cause” divorce had almost completely replaced the traditional OT types of divorce (Joseph & Mary; Matthew 1:19).

“Suppose a man marries a woman but she does not please him. Having discovered something wrong with her (*indecent, nakedness, nudity, shameful exposure*; a cause of ‘sexual immorality’ in her), he writes her a letter (*certificate*) of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house.” Deuteronomy 24:1 (NLT)

Rabbi Shammai – said that Hillel had interpreted the Scriptures wrongly and that the whole phrase “a cause of sexual immorality” meant nothing more than the ground of sexual immorality; it did not mean two grounds, sexual immorality and “Any Cause.”

The interpretation of this short phrase, “a cause of sexual immorality,” was a matter of huge public debate. The *disciples of Shammai* wanted people to restrict themselves to divorces based on the OT grounds – unfaithfulness and neglect of food, clothing or conjugal love. But the *common people* preferred Hillel’s interpretation, which added the “Any Cause” divorce.

Jesus was asked if He agreed with the new Hillelite “Any Cause” divorce, but He wasn’t really interested in this debate and was more concerned to tell the Hillelites and Shammaites where they had **both gone wrong**.

Jesus gave the same straightforward interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1 that Shammai taught. He said that the phrase “a cause of sexual immorality” meant “nothing except sexual immorality.” And to emphasize this, Jesus said that if someone got divorced on the basis of any other interpretation (i.e., the “Any Cause” divorce), they were not properly divorced, and so if they remarried they would be committing adultery.

So if you think that this is Jesus being asked ... “Is it ever lawful to divorce?” and that He answered “No – except in cases of sexual immorality” ... you miss what’s going on here. Jesus was using the same language as the people He was speaking to, and He was referring to biblical texts and legal discussions they all knew about. He was answering their question in plain language, and He wasn’t making a universal statement.

Therefore when He said “nothing except ‘sexual immorality,’” He was saying that the phrase “a cause of sexual immorality” did not include the extra ground of “Any Cause,” and He didn’t mean “there is no divorce ever, in any part of the Bible, except on the ground of ‘sexual immorality.’”

Jesus gave the Pharisees a straightforward answer about where He stood in their debate, but He was much more interested in marriage than in divorce, so although He gave this answer in Mark 10, His focus was in talking about marriage, and specifically about matters where He disagreed with both camps.

Jesus was determined to tell His listeners where they had all gone wrong with regard to marriage and divorce – so He went back to basics! **Polygamy** was allowed by most Jews in the first century but Jesus says that **monogamy** was the biblical ideal from the beginning. Jesus alludes to Genesis 2:24 (*written by Moses!*) when He says, “So they are no longer two but one flesh.” He deliberately includes the word two, which is not actually found in the Hebrew text.

The fact that Jesus includes the word **TWO** is very significant. He points out that God made the first human beings “male and female” – both singular – and says that the perfect marriage involves only two people – man & woman. Jesus demonstrates how serious it is to break up a marriage by giving a commandment ... (*doesn’t say can’t – says shouldn’t*)

“Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Mark 10:9 (NIV)

The Pharisees think that they have a clever answer for this: they say that sometimes Moses instructed that you must divorce a wife. They believed that divorce was compulsory if a woman committed adultery, because Deuteronomy 24:1 says that a man should give a divorce certificate to a wife guilty of “sexual immorality.”

So they argue with Jesus: “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce?” Jesus replies, “Moses allowed you to divorce your wives” – that is, he did not command it but allowed it. It was not compulsory, although it was permissible. Jesus says that God does not want us to divorce if we can avoid it, even in the case of adultery; He wants us to **forgive** an erring partner rather than divorce them.

Is there a limit to the number of times we have to forgive? I'll bet that the Pharisees asked that same question! Jesus thought that people were being too quick to divorce so He explains further:

“It was because your hearts were hard (*hardheartedness; stubbornness – a stubborn refusal to repent and stop breaking marriage vows*) that Moses wrote (*permitted*) you this law ...”
Mark 10:5 (NIV) – cf. Matthew 19:8

A summary of Jesus' teaching during this debate would be something like this: All divorces based on “Any Cause” (i.e., groundless divorces) are invalid, because the phrase “a cause of sexual immorality” (Deut. 24:1) means nothing more than “sexual immorality.” Moses never commanded divorce but allowed us to divorce a partner who is hardhearted (who unrepentantly breaks marriage vows).

I'd also like to know what Jesus thought about other biblical grounds for divorce. We know that He rejected the “Any Cause” divorces and that He accepted divorce for adultery but we don't know what He thought about the three grounds for divorce in Exodus 21 because no one asked Him about it – or if they did, the Gospel writers did not think His teaching on this was significant enough to include in their accounts. Based on what Jesus teaches I would propose that He would counsel forgiveness rather than divorce, unless the spouse was sinning hardheartedly.

Finally, when Paul writes his letters to the church in Corinth he's not addressing the “Any Cause” issue. He is facing the Roman method of Divorce-By-Separation. In this approach people separated from their partners and then they considered themselves divorced and free to remarry, and under Roman law they were. The only difference in the Roman groundless divorce was that WOMEN as well as men could initiate it.

Jesus (and Paul) have the same message for two different cultures ...

1. Fully Alive Followers should never cause a divorce – they should not break their marriage vows. (**Abusive situations ... share it with someone, get help, find security & protection**)
2. Fully Alive Followers should not use a groundless divorce – Jewish believers should not use the Hillelite “Any Cause” divorce, and no one should use the Roman “divorce-by-separation.”

What do I need to do (or not do) so I can live today in a way that will help our marriage thrive tomorrow? Help us to remain in it for the long haul.

We should do all we can to save a marriage ... forgive a partner who breaks vows and then repents. If you have wrongly enacted a divorce-by-separation you should attempt to be reconciled and not remarry because that would make the divorce irreversible. If you have been divorced against your will, you may accept it (grieve, weep, mourn & wail). If you cannot reverse the divorce keep in mind that God has called you to peace.

God's ideal for marriage is for a husband and wife to be faithful to each other and for them to support each other with food, clothing and marital love. Don't break your vows! Don't harden your hearts! Forgive ... seek forgiveness ... pursue peace. **Keep in mind our children ... they were center stage in the very next text in Mark's story!**

Let's Pray! (*Who will you process this with? Group, Nexus, Table, Coach, Counselor; Where do you have work to do? Who hopes you'll get to work soon?*)

God hates divorce ... but He Himself is a divorcee. (Israel & Judah ... Malachi, Jeremiah & Ezekiel)

God does NOT hate those who have been divorced. He knows your pain. He wants to bring healing, forgiveness and restoration – identity ... self-worth ... value.

Soften your heart (*the inability to have our heart in tune with God's best intention and plan*) – Jesus offers a **cure** to hardheartedness – His kingdom provides the way for our hearts to be softened ... seek reconciliation ... admit failure ... acknowledge guilt ... humble yourself ... repent.

Next Steps: He Did This Just For You & First Steps Books – Today's App Notes

Next Week: Fully Changed – Part 3