

Matthew 19 Commentary

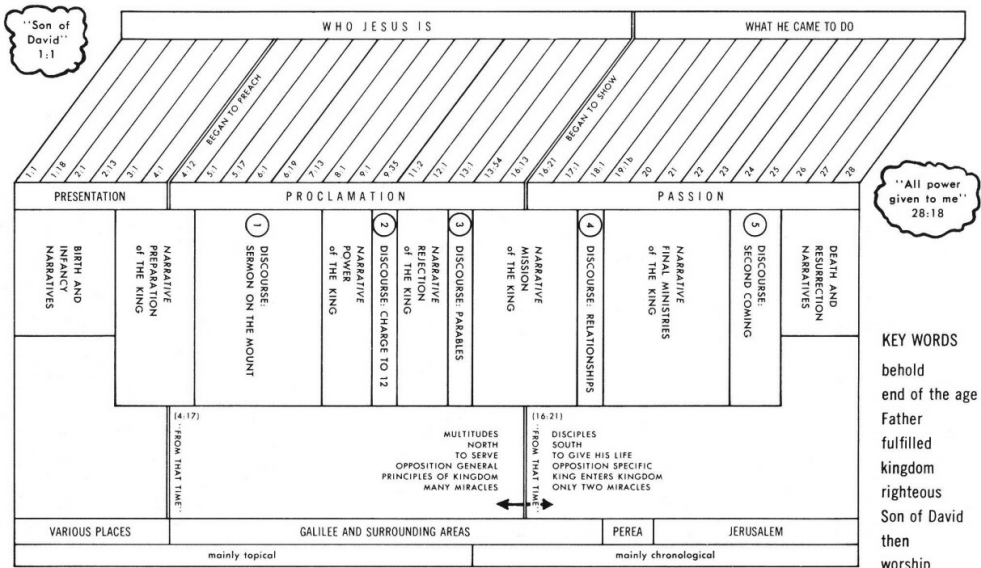
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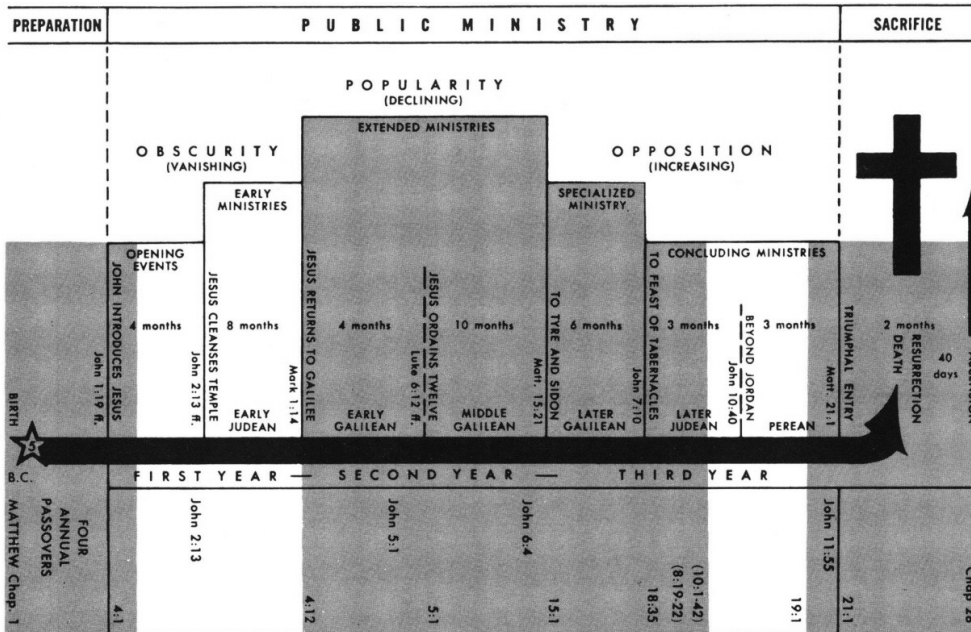
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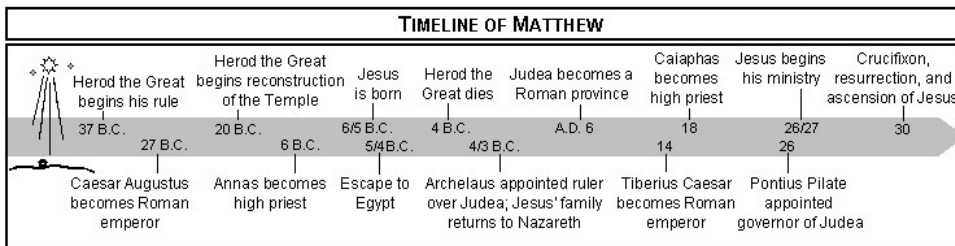
MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." 2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."



**THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED
 BY MATTHEW (shaded area)**



Click chart to enlarge

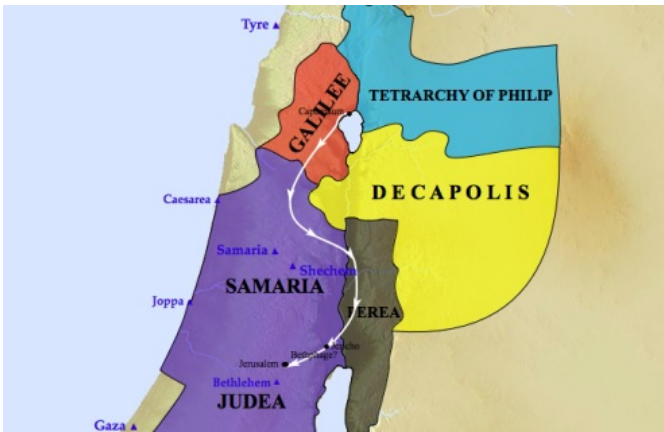


Source: Borrow [Byrie Study Bible](#)

**PLEASE NOTE - THIS PAGE IS INCOMPLETE AND IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION - JULY, 2024
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Matthew 19:1 When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan;

- **that when:** Mk 10:1 Jn 10:40
- **he departed:** This was our Lord's final departure from Galilee, previous to his crucifixion; but he appears to have taken in a large compass in his journey, and passed through the districts east of Jordan. Some learned men, however, are of opinion, that instead of "beyond Jordan," we should render, "by the side of Jordan," as [peran <Strong's G4008>] especially with a genitive, sometimes signifies.



Galilee North of Jerusalem

When Jesus had finished ([teleo](#)) these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan;

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 19:1-2. Great multitudes followed Christ. When Christ departs, it is best for us to follow him. They found him as able and ready to help elsewhere, as he had been in Galilee; wherever the Sun of Righteousness arose, it was with healing in his wings.

Matthew 19:2 and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

- Mt 4:23-25 9:35,36 12:15 14:35,36 15:30,31 Mk 6:55,56

SUPERFICIAL FOLLOWERS

and large crowds followed ([akoloutheo](#)) Him, and He healed them there - Followed ([akoloutheo](#)) is an important verb in the Gospels but requires close observation of the context to yield an accurate interpretation. In the present context there is no suggestion that the crowd was composed of genuine (born again) disciples. These **large crowds** were like those in John 6:2+ where "A large crowd followed Him, (WHY FOLLOW HIM?) because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick." And here we see He gives them signs of healing. The contrast is later clearly seen in Mt 19:21, 27, 28+, where Jesus issues the clear call regarding the cost of discipleship and then issues the command to follow Him. The **large crowds** followed Him to get something, while true disciples count the cost and follow Him (cf Mk 8:34-37+).

Followed (190) [akoloutheo](#) from **a** = expresses union with, likeness + **keleuthos** = a road, way) means to walk the same road (Ponder that simple definition dear believer - Am I willing to walk the same road as Jesus?) Literally to follow (like the crowds followed Jesus) and in a figurative sense to follow Jesus as a disciple. To follow (closely) and was used of soldiers, servants and pupils. To go after someone or something (not as a true disciple however as we see with the crowds who physically followed Jesus, following however without a willingness to commit wholly to Him! cf John 6:60-65, 66) Early in the history of the Greek language [akoloutheo](#) came to mean to imitate or follow someone's example. This dual meaning colored the New Testament use of our word [akoloutheo](#). Note that most of the uses of [akoloutheo](#) are in the Gospels and thus this verb is firmly linked with the life of Jesus, for He is the One to follow.

When Jesus issued a call to "Follow Me" (see the 12 highlighted verbs in list below, all present imperative) [akoloutheo](#) was always in the present imperative indicating that Jesus is calling for this to be one's lifelong path, ultimately one which can only be successfully trodden by yielding to His Spirit who enables us to obey that command as our lifestyle (not perfection, but general direction). There is a big difference between the disciples who followed Jesus in Mt 4:20, 22+ and the crowds following Him (Mt 4:25+, Mt 8:1+, etc) for the former left their possessions (nets, boat), while the latter left nothing. Some claimed they wanted to follow Him but were not willing to count the cost (Mt 8:19, 22). In the Gospels [akoloutheo](#) is always related to Jesus as the object of following in discipleship (exceptions: Mark 9:38; 14:13 par. Luke 22:10; Matt 9:19; John 11:31; 20:6) The phrase **Follow Me** 19x all [present imperative](#) (see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) - Matt. 4:19; Matt. 8:22; Matt. 9:9; Matt. 16:24; Matt. 19:21; Mk. 1:17; Mk. 2:14; Mk. 8:34; Mk. 10:21; Lk. 5:27; Lk. 9:23; Lk. 9:59; Lk. 18:22; Jn. 1:43; Jn. 10:27; Jn. 12:26; Jn. 13:36; Jn. 21:19; Jn. 21:22

[Click here for an in depth discussion of \[akoloutheo\]\(#\) in the New International Dictionary of the New Testament](#) - Here is an

excerpt - **Disciple, Follow, Imitate, After** - Men are dependent upon one another and their lives are shaped by each other in many ways. Sometimes it is through a casual relationship, an interested companion or hanger-on. But it may be the more lasting relationship of a pupil or disciple to his master or teacher. In the NT, the words connected with discipleship are applied chiefly to the followers of Jesus and describe the life of faith. *akolouthēō* (follow) denotes the action of a man answering the call of Jesus whose whole life is redirected in obedience. A *mathētēs* (disciple) is one who has heard the call of Jesus and joins him. *mimēōmai* (imitate) can be distinguished, in so far as it mainly emphasizes the nature of a particular kind of behaviour, modelled on someone else. The prep. *opiso* (after) is characteristic of the call to follow Jesus.

TDNT - In Greek the ordinary sense of following led to that of intellectual, moral, and religious following. (IN NT) External following is still involved (cf. Matt. 8:19; Mark 10:28) but with a total commitment and in an exclusive relation to one who is recognized as not just a teacher but the Messiah. This discipleship brings participation in salvation (Mark 10:17; Luke 9:61-62; Jn. 8:12; Rev. 14:4), but also in suffering (Matt. 8:19-20; Mark 8:34; Jn. 12:25-26). The strength of the figurative use may have been in the presence of sayings like Matt. 10:38, the possibility of discipleship without literally going after Jesus, and the active stress which rules out the use of a noun to express the concept. Since it is the historical Jesus that is followed, it is natural that other terms should be found in the other NT writings to describe the relation to the exalted Lord and his Spirit. Rev. 14:4 simply applies Matt. 10:38 to a particular group. (BORROW [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

Akoloutheo in Matthew - Matt. 4:20; Matt. 4:22; Matt. 4:25; Matt. 8:1; Matt. 8:10; Matt. 8:19; Matt. 8:22; Matt. 8:23; Matt. 9:9; Matt. 9:19; Matt. 9:27; Matt. 10:38; Matt. 12:15; Matt. 14:13; Matt. 16:24; Matt. 19:2; Matt. 19:21; Matt. 19:27; Matt. 19:28; Matt. 20:29; Matt. 20:34; Matt. 21:9; Matt. 26:58; Matt. 27:55

Matthew 19:3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”

- **testing Him and asking:** Mt 16:1 22:16-18,35 Mk 10:2 12:13,15 Lu 11:53,54 Jn 8:6 Heb 3:9
- **Is it lawful** Mt 5:31,32 Mal 2:14-16

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”

Ryrie - The rabbis were divided on what were legitimate grounds for divorce. The [followers of Shammai](#) held that a man could not divorce his wife unless he found her guilty of sexual immorality. The [followers of Hillel](#) were more lax, allowing divorce for many, including trivial, reasons.

NET NOTE - The question of the Pharisees was anything but sincere; they were asking it to test him. Jesus was now in the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas (i.e., Judea and beyond the Jordan) and it is likely that the Pharisees were hoping he might answer the question of divorce in a way similar to John the Baptist and so suffer the same fate as John, i.e., death at the hands of Herod (cf. 14:1–12). Jesus answered the question not on the basis of rabbinic custom and the debate over Deut 24:1, but rather from the account of creation and God’s original design.

NET NOTE - TECHNICAL NOTE - † Most MSS have either *ἄνθρωπον* (*anthrōpō*, “for a man” [so 2 κ C D W Θ 087 f1, 13 33 latt]) or *ἄνδρα* (*andri*, “for a husband” [1424c pc]) before the infinitive *πολεῖν* (*apolusai*, “to divorce”). The latter reading is an assimilation to the parallel in Mark; the former reading may have been motivated by the clarification needed (especially to give the following *αὐτοῦ* [*autou*, “his”] an antecedent). But a few significant MSS (κ^* B L Γ 579 [700] 1424* pc) have neither noun. As the harder reading, it seems to best explain the rise of the others. NA27, however, reads *ἄνθρωπον* here.

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 19:3-12. The Pharisees were desirous of drawing something from Jesus which they might represent as contrary to the law of Moses. Cases about marriage have been numerous, and sometimes perplexed; made so, not by the law of God, but by the lusts and follies of men; and often people fix what they will do, before they ask for advice. Jesus replied by asking whether they had not read the account of the creation, and the first example of marriage; thus pointing out that every departure therefrom was wrong. That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and kept to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to prepare us for, and preserve us to, the kingdom of heaven. When the gospel is really embraced, it makes men kind relatives and faithful friends; it teaches them to bear the burdens, and to bear with the infirmities of those with whom they are connected, to consider their peace and happiness more than their own. As to ungodly persons, it is proper that they should be restrained by laws, from breaking the peace of society. And we learn that the married state should be entered upon with great seriousness and earnest prayer.

Related Resource:

- **BORROW** [Divorce and remarriage : four Christian views](#) by Wayne House

Matthew 19:4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,

- Have: Mt 12:3 21:6,42 22:31 Mk 2:25 12:10,26 Lu 6:3 10:26
- that: Ge 1:27 5:2 Mal 2:15

Related Passages:

Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 2:23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE

Henry Morris - In response to a vital question about the most important of all human institutions (marriage and family), the Lord quotes as His authority the account of creation in Genesis. It is obvious that He regarded the creation record as historically true and divinely inspired.

Matthew 19:5 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?'

- said: Ge 2:21-24 Ps 45:10 Mk 10:5-9 Eph 5:31
- cleave: [Proskollao <Strong's G4347>] "shall be cemented to his wife," as the Hebrew davak implies; a beautiful metaphor, forcibly intimating that nothing but death can separate them. Ge 34:3 De 4:4 10:20 11:22 1Sa 18:1 2Sa 1:26 1Ki 11:2 Ps 63:8 Ro 12:9
- and they: 1Co 6:16 7:2,4

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?'

Henry Morris - Modern critics often allege that the first two chapters of Genesis are two different and contradictory accounts of creation. Jesus, however, quoted Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 as being perfectly complementary and of absolute authority. Furthermore, He was there at the beginning!

Matthew 19:6 "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

- God: Pr 2:17 Mal 2:14 Mk 10:9 Ro 7:2 1Co 7:10-14 Eph 5:28 Heb 13:4
- hath: [Zeugos <Strong's G2201>] "hath yoked together," as oxen in the plough, where each must pull equally in order to bring it on. Among the ancients, they put a yoke upon the necks of a new married couple, or chains on their arms, to shew that they were to be one, closely united, and pulling equally together in all the concerns of life

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate

Henry Morris - The creation account is the foundation for the institution of marriage which was validated by the Creator Himself and established to be a lifelong union between one man and woman who were commanded to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28).

QUESTION - [What does "what God has joined together, let no one separate" mean? WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - The command "what God has joined together, let no one separate" refers to marriage and divorce. It is from Jesus'

teaching on marriage and divorce found in Mark 10:1–12 and Matthew 19:1–12. On one occasion, the Pharisees asked Jesus if it is legitimate for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus in essence answers, “No”: “Haven’t you read . . . that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘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” (Matthew 19:4–6; cf. Genesis 1:27; 2:24).

Jesus’ point is that a married couple is something that “God has joined together.” Marriage is not of human origin—it originated with God and is part of the way that God designed the human race to live. In saying “let no one separate” a marriage, Jesus taught that divorce is not God’s plan. Once a couple is married, they have been joined together by God Himself, and the union is meant to be for life. This principle holds true despite the faith (or lack thereof) of the couple. When two atheists marry, they have been joined together by God, whether they recognize it or not. If God has joined them together, then no human being has the right to break that union.

Later, after Jesus says, “What God has joined together, let no one separate,” the Pharisees point out that Moses allowed divorce. Jesus agrees, but also points out that the allowance was made due to “hardness of heart” (Matthew 19:8, NASB), reiterating that divorce was never God’s original plan.

Jesus’ command against separating what God has joined implies that it is possible for a marriage union to be broken and for the one flesh to be separated by divorce. There is debate among Christians about whether [divorce is ever justified](#). Many (perhaps most) would allow for divorce in the case of unrepentant unfaithfulness on the part of one spouse (based on Matthew 19:9) or desertion of a believing spouse by an unbelieving spouse who no longer wants to be married to a believer (see 1 Corinthians 7:15). In these cases the marriage bond has been broken by unfaithfulness or desertion—a severing of something that God has joined together—and it is a tragic occurrence.

Even if the above exceptions are allowed, our culture and, too often, even the church seem to regard divorce as something far less serious than it is. If marriage were simply a human convention similar to a business partnership or club membership, then people would be free to enter and exit at will. Divorce is not simply two people deciding to part company; it is one or perhaps both of the marriage partners deciding that they will act decisively to end something that God intended to be permanent. That is a serious thing!

Related Resources:

- [BORROW Divorce and remarriage : four Christian views](#) by Wayne House
- [What does the Bible say about divorce and remarriage?](#)
- [What does it mean that “the two shall become one flesh” \(Genesis 2:24\)?](#)
- [Is physical abuse an acceptable reason for divorce?](#)
- [What are biblical grounds for divorce?](#)
- [Why does God hate divorce?](#)
- [Is the divorce rate among Christians truly the same as among non-Christians?](#)

Matthew 19:7 They *said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?”

- Why: Mt 5:31 De 24:1-4 Isa 50:1 Jer 3:8 Mk 10:4
- and to: Mt 1:19 Mal 2:16

They *said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?”

Henry Morris - Christ here confirms the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

NET NOTE - A quotation from Deut 24:1. The Pharisees were all in agreement that the OT permitted a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce his wife (not vice-versa) and that remarriage was therefore sanctioned. But the two rabbinic schools of Shammai and Hillel differed on the grounds for divorce. Shammai was much stricter than Hillel and permitted divorce only in the case of sexual immorality. Hillel permitted divorce for almost any reason (cf. the Mishnah, m. Gittin 9.10).

NET NOTE - † Although the majority of witnesses (B C W 078 087 f13 33 syp,h) have ατήν (autēn, “her”) after the infinitive πολσαι (apolusai, “to divorce”), a variant lacks the ατήν. This shorter reading may be due to assimilation to the Markan parallel, but since it is attested in early and diverse witnesses (κ D L Z Θ f1 579 700 pc lat) and since the parallel verse (Mark 10:4) already departs at many points, the shorter reading seems more likely to be original. The pronoun has been included in the translation,

however, for clarity. NA27 includes the word in brackets, indicating reservations regarding its authenticity.

Matthew 19:8 He *said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

- because: Ps 95:8 Zec 7:12 Mal 2:13,14 Mk 10:5
- suffered: Mt 3:15 8:31 1Co 7:6
- but: Ge 2:24 7:7 Jer 6:16

He *said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

NET NOTE - A few important MSS (κ Φ pc) have the name “Jesus” here, but it is probably not original. Nevertheless, this translation routinely specifies the referents of pronouns to improve clarity, so that has been done here.

Matthew 19:9 “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

- Whosoever: Mt 5:32 Mk 10:11,12 Lu 16:18 1Co 7:10-13,39
- except: 2Ch 21:11 Jer 3:8 Eze 16:8,15,29 1Co 5:1
- doth: Ge 12:18,19 20:3 Jer 3:1 Ro 7:2,3 1Co 7:4,11,39

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery

Henry Morris - The relatively easy divorce allowed in the Mosaic law was not intended in God's original economy (Matthew 19:8). The only allowable grounds for divorce according to Christ is adultery. The Greek word for "fornication" (*porneia*) could include any sexual sin committed after the betrothal contract. On the other hand, Jesus did not even allow this exception in Luke 16:18. The conclusion would be that even though adultery or fornication are permissible grounds for divorce and remarriage, it is still better to salvage the marriage if possible (Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-15).

QUESTION - [What is sexual immorality? WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - In the New Testament, the word most often translated “sexual immorality” is *porneia*. This word is also translated as “whoredom,” “fornication,” and “idolatry.” It means “a surrendering of sexual purity,” and it is primarily used of premarital sexual relations. From this Greek word we get the English word *pornography*, stemming from the concept of “selling off.” Sexual immorality is the “selling off” of sexual purity and involves any type of sexual expression outside the boundaries of a biblically defined marriage relationship (Matthew 19:4–5).

The connection between sexual immorality and idolatry is best understood in the context of 1 Corinthians 6:18, which says, “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.” The bodies of believers are the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Pagan idol worship often involved perverse and immoral sexual acts performed in the temple of a false god. When we use our physical bodies for immoral purposes, we are imitating pagan worship by profaning God’s holy temple with acts He calls detestable (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Biblical prohibitions against sexual immorality are often coupled with warnings against *“impurity”* (Romans 1:24; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19). This word in the Greek is *akatharsia*, which means “defiled, foul, ceremonially unfit.” It connotes actions that render a person unfit to enter God’s presence. Those who persist in unrepentant immorality and impurity cannot come into the presence of God. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8; cf. Psalm 24:3–4). It is impossible to maintain a healthy intimacy with God when our bodies and souls are given over to impurities of any kind.

Sexuality is God’s design. He alone can define the parameters for its use. The Bible is clear that sex was created to be enjoyed between one man and one woman who are in a covenant marriage until one of them dies (Matthew 19:6). Sexuality is His sacred wedding gift to human beings. Any expression of it outside those parameters constitutes an abuse of God’s gift. Adultery, [premarital sex](#), [pornography](#), and [homosexual relations](#) are all contrary to God’s design. That makes those things sinful.

The following are some common objections to God’s commands against sexual immorality:

1. It's not wrong if we love each other. The Bible makes no distinction between "loving" and "unloving" sexual relations. The only biblical distinction is between married and unmarried people. Sex within marriage is blessed (Genesis 1:28); sex outside of marriage is "fornication" or "sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 7:2–5).

2. Times have changed, and what was wrong in biblical times is no longer considered sin. Most of the passages condemning sexual immorality also include evils such as greed, lust, stealing, etc. (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Galatians 5:19–21). We have no problem understanding that these other things are still sin. God's character does not change with culture's opinion (Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 13:8).

3. We're married in God's eyes. The fallacy of this idea is that the God who created marriage in the first place would retract His own command to accommodate what He has called sin. God declared marriage to be one man and one woman united for life (Mark 10:6–9). The Bible often uses the imagery of a wedding and a covenant marriage as a metaphor to teach spiritual truth (Matthew 22:2; Revelation 19:9). God takes marriage seriously, and His "eyes" see immorality for what it is, regardless of how cleverly we have redefined it.

4. I can still have a good relationship with God because He understands. Proverbs 28:9 says, "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." We fool ourselves when we think that we can stubbornly choose sin and God does not care. 1 John 2:3–4 contains a serious challenge for those who persist in this line of thinking: "We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person."

Hebrews 13:4 makes God's expectation for His children crystal clear: "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." Sexual immorality is wrong. The blood of Jesus can cleanse us from every type of impurity when we repent and receive His forgiveness (1 John 1:7–9). But that cleansing means our old nature and all its practices, including sexual immorality, are put to death (Romans 6:12–14; 8:13). Ephesians 5:3 says, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people."

Related Resources:

- [Why is sexual purity so important?](#)
- [What makes sexual sin such a big deal?](#)
- [What is the biblical fix for sexual brokenness?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about sexual compatibility / incompatibility?](#)

QUESTION - [Is remarriage after divorce always adultery?](#) [WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - Before we even begin to answer this question, let us reiterate, "God hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16). The pain, confusion, and frustration most people experience after a divorce are surely part of the reason that God hates divorce. Even more difficult, biblically, than the question of divorce, is the question of remarriage. The vast majority of people who divorce either remarry or consider getting remarried. What does the Bible say about this?

Matthew 19:9 says, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." See also Matthew 5:32. These Scriptures clearly state that remarriage after a divorce is adultery, except in the instance of "marital unfaithfulness." In regards to this "[exception clause](#)" and its implications, please read the following articles:

- [What does the Bible say about divorce and remarriage?](#)
- [I am divorced. Can I remarry?](#)

It is our view that, in certain instances, a person is allowed to divorce and remarry without being guilty of adultery: a person whose spouse commits adultery, for example, and a believer whose unbelieving spouse abandons the marriage. We are not saying that a person under such circumstances should remarry. The Bible's instruction to divorced people is to remain single or be reconciled (1 Corinthians 7:11). At the same time, it is our view that God offers His mercy and grace to the innocent party in a divorce and allows that person to remarry.

A person who gets a divorce for a reason other than the reasons listed above, and then gets remarried has committed adultery (Luke 16:18). The question then becomes, is this remarriage an "act" of adultery, or a "state" of adultery. The present tense of the Greek in Matthew 5:32; 19:9; and Luke 16:18 can indicate a continuous state of adultery. At the same time, the present tense in Greek does not always indicate continuous action. Sometimes it simply means that something occurred (Aoristic, Punctiliar, or

Gnomic present). For example, the word "divorces" in Matthew 5:32 is present tense, but divorcing is not a continual action. It is our view that remarriage, no matter the circumstances, is not a continual state of adultery. Only the act of getting remarried itself is adultery.

In the Old Testament Law, the punishment for adultery was death (Leviticus 20:10). At the same time, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 mentions remarriage after a divorce, does not call it adultery, and does not demand the death penalty for the remarried spouse. The Bible explicitly says that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), but nowhere explicitly states that God hates remarriage. The Bible nowhere commands a remarried couple to divorce. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 does not describe the remarriage as invalid. Ending a remarriage through divorce would be just as sinful as ending a first marriage through divorce. Both would include the breaking of vows before God, between the couple, and in front of witnesses.

No matter the circumstances, once a couple is remarried, they should strive to live out their married lives in fidelity, in a God-honoring way, with Christ at the center of their marriage. A marriage is a marriage. God does not view the new marriage as invalid or adulterous. A remarried couple should devote themselves to God and to each other—and honor God by making their new marriage a lasting and Christ-centered one (Ephesians 5:22-33).

QUESTION - [What is the exception clause?](#)

ANSWER - The "exception clause" is Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 "except for marital unfaithfulness." It gives an "exception" for remarriage after a divorce being considered adultery. Matthew 5:32 reads, "But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, **except for marital unfaithfulness**, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery." Similarly, Matthew 19:9 reads, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, **except for marital unfaithfulness**, and marries another woman commits adultery." So, what precisely is "marital unfaithfulness," and why is it an exception to Jesus' statement that remarriage after a divorce is adultery?

The meaning of Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 is clear. If a person gets a divorce and then remarries, it is considered adultery **unless** the exception clause is in effect. The phrase "marital unfaithfulness" is a translation of the Greek word *porneia*, the word from which we get our modern word "pornography." The essential meaning of *porneia* is "sexual perversion." In Greek literature around the same time as the New Testament, *porneia* was used to refer to adultery, fornication, prostitution, incest, and idolatry. It is used 25 times in the New Testament, most often translated "fornication."

The meaning of *porneia* in the New Testament seems to be the general concept of sexual perversion. Other Greek words are used to refer to specific forms of sexual perversion, such as adultery. With this meaning in mind, according to the exception clause, any participation in sexual perversion/misconduct is an exception to Jesus' statement that remarriage after a divorce is adultery. If one spouse commits adultery, or any act of sexual perversion, and a divorce results, the "innocent" spouse is free to remarry without it being considered adulterous.

Please understand, though, that the exception clause is not a command for divorce and/or remarriage. Jesus is not saying that if marital unfaithfulness occurs a couple *should* divorce. Jesus is not saying that if a divorce occurs due to marital unfaithfulness, the innocent spouse *should* remarry. At most, Jesus is giving allowance for divorce and remarriage to occur. In no sense is Jesus declaring divorce and remarriage to be the best or only option. Repentance, forgiveness, counseling, and restoration are God's desire for marriages damaged by unfaithfulness. God can and will heal any marriage in which both spouses are committed to Him and willing to follow His Word.

QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about divorce and remarriage? WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - First of all, no matter what view one takes on the issue of divorce, it is important to remember Malachi 2:16: "I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel." According to the Bible, marriage is a lifetime commitment. "So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6). God realizes, though, that marriages involve two sinful human beings and that divorces are going to occur. In the Old Testament, He laid down some laws to protect the rights of divorcées (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Jesus pointed out that these laws were given because of the hardness of people's hearts, not because such laws were God's desire (Matthew 19:8).

The issue of remarriage after a divorce is addressed directly in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11: "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife." So, the biblical rule is that there should be no divorce and, if a divorce does occur, no remarriage.

We have two possible exceptions to this foundational principle, one of which Paul addresses in the same context: a believer abandoned by an unbelieving spouse "is not bound" (1 Corinthians 7:15). And Jesus says, "Except for [sexual immorality](#)" in Matthew

5:32 and Matthew 19:9. So, depending on the exact meaning of *bound* and *sexual immorality*, there may be some cases in which remarriage is allowable after divorce. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul's argument for the "unbound" condition of the believing spouse is based on who leaves—it is the unbeliever who [abandons the marriage](#), and the believer is an innocent party.

Taking a closer look at Jesus' words in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, the phrase *except for sexual immorality* possibly gives God's permission for divorce and remarriage. Many interpreters understand this "[exception clause](#)" in Matthew as referring to marital unfaithfulness during the betrothal period. In Jewish custom, a man and a woman were considered married even while they were still engaged or "betrothed." According to this view, immorality during this betrothal period would be the only valid reason for a divorce.

However, the Greek word translated "sexual immorality" is a general word that can mean any form of sexual sin. It can refer to fornication, prostitution, adultery, etc. Jesus is possibly saying that divorce is permissible if sexual immorality is committed. Sexual relations are an integral part of the marital bond: "The two will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31). Therefore, any breaking of that bond by sexual relations outside of marriage might be a permissible reason for divorce.

Jesus' teaching seems to be that [adultery](#) unties the marriage knot, but the allowance of remarriage is not explicit. In Matthew 5:32, the assumption is that the woman who is divorced will remarry, and Jesus seems to say that, unless her first marriage was dissolved by adultery (on her husband's part), her second marriage will make her an adulteress. Jesus also has remarriage in mind in Matthew 19:9. In both passages, divorce and remarriage seem to be allowed in the circumstance covered by the [exception clause](#), whatever that is interpreted to be. It is important to note that only the innocent party is allowed to remarry. Although not stated in the text, it would seem the allowance for remarriage after divorce is God's mercy for the one who was sinned against, not for the one who committed the sexual immorality. There may be instances where the guilty party is allowed to remarry, but they are not evident in this text.

1 Corinthians 7:15 may be another biblical "exception," allowing remarriage if an unbelieving spouse divorces a believer. The verse says, "But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace." The text is clear that, if an unbelieving spouse leaves a believer, the believer is free to accept the separation and move on with life. He or she is "not bound," indicating full liberty. The Amplified Bible translates the statement as "the [remaining] brother or sister is not [spiritually or morally] bound." The believing spouse can work for reconciliation (1 Corinthians 7:11), but he or she is not obligated to remain in the marriage.

If desertion dissolves a marriage, then is remarriage permitted? The context of 1 Corinthians 7:15 does not mention remarriage, except in verse 11, which says a divorced person cannot remarry. But, if "the believing husband or wife is no longer bound to the other" (verse 15, NLT), then it is reasonable to assume that remarriage is allowed. It seems in verse 15 Paul is giving an exception to the rule of verse 11.

Some also claim that abuse (spousal or child) is a valid reason for divorce even though it is not listed as such in the Bible. While this may very well be the case, it is never wise to presume upon the Word of God. In cases of abuse, a separation is definitely in order and should occur immediately.

Sometimes lost in the debate over the [exception clause](#) is the fact that, whatever "sexual immorality" means in Matthew 5 and 19, it is an allowance for divorce, not a requirement for it. Even when adultery is committed, a couple can, through God's grace, learn to forgive and begin rebuilding their marriage. God has forgiven us of so much more. Surely, we can follow His example and even forgive the sin of adultery (Ephesians 4:32). However, in many instances a spouse is unrepentant and continues the immoral behavior. That is when Matthew 19:9 applies.

Looking to quickly remarry after an allowable divorce can also cause problems. It might be God's desire for the divorced person to remain single, even if he or she can biblically remarry. God sometimes calls people to be single so their attention is not divided (1 Corinthians 7:32–35). Remarriage after a divorce may be an option in some circumstances, but that does not mean it is the only option.

In summary, the Bible makes it clear that God [hates divorce](#) (Malachi 2:16) and that reconciliation and forgiveness should mark a believer's life (Luke 11:4; Ephesians 4:32). However, God recognizes that divorce will occur, even among His children. A divorced and/or remarried believer should not feel any less loved by God, even if the divorce and/or remarriage is not covered under the possible [exception clause](#) of Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9.

QUESTION - [I am divorced. Can I remarry according to the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - We often receive questions like "I am divorced for such and such a reason. Can I get remarried?" Or "I have been divorced twice—the first for adultery by my spouse, the second for incompatibility. The man I'm dating has been divorced three times

—the first for incompatibility, the second for adultery on his part, the third for adultery on his wife’s part. Can we get married to each other?” Questions like these are difficult to answer because the Bible does not go into great detail regarding the various scenarios for remarriage after a divorce.

What we can know for sure is that it is God’s plan for a married couple to stay married as long as both spouses are alive (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6). The basic principle concerning divorce and remarriage is laid out clearly in 1 Corinthians 7:10–11: “To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.” So, the foundational rule is that there should be no divorce and, if a divorce does happen, no remarriage.

Once we understand the basic rule that there should be no remarriage after a divorce, we can look at the possible exceptions to that rule. One possible allowance for remarriage after a divorce is found in Matthew 19:9—if the marriage ended because of adultery, then the wronged spouse may be free to remarry. But this interpretation is debated among Christians.

Another possible allowance for remarriage is desertion—when an unbelieving spouse leaves a believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12–15). In such a case, the believer is “not bound” (verse 15). This passage does not specifically address remarriage, however, and much depends on the meaning of the words *not bound*. Instances of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse would be sufficient cause for separation, but the Bible does not speak of these sins in the context of divorce or remarriage.

While God [hates divorce](#) (Malachi 2:16), God is also merciful and forgiving. Every divorce is a result of sin, either on the part of one spouse or both. Does God forgive divorce? Absolutely! Divorce is no less forgivable than any other sin. Forgiveness of all sins is available through faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7). If God forgives the sin of divorce, does that mean you are free to remarry? In light of the command to “remain unmarried or else be reconciled” in 1 Corinthians 7:11, the answer would seem to be no, except in the specific circumstances mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:12–15 and Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9.

Being [unmarried](#) is not a curse. God sometimes calls people to remain single (1 Corinthians 7:7–8). Singleness can be an opportunity to serve God wholeheartedly (1 Corinthians 7:32–36).

So, can you or should you get remarried? We cannot give a blanket answer to that question. Ultimately, that is between you, your potential spouse, and, most importantly, God. The only advice we can give is for you to search the Scripture and pray to God for wisdom regarding what He would have you do (James 1:5). Pray with an open mind and genuinely ask the Lord to place His desires on your heart (Psalm 37:4). Seek the Lord’s will (Proverbs 3:5–6) and follow His leading.

Related Resources:

- [Is physical abuse an acceptable reason for divorce?](#)
- [Does the Bible say anything about making a second marriage a success?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about adultery?](#)
- [What are biblical grounds for divorce?](#)
- [What is a certificate of divorce \(Matthew 5:31\)?](#)

Matthew 19:10 The disciples *said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”

- Ge 2:18 Pr 5:15-19 18:22 19:13,14 21:9,19 1Co 7:1,2,8,26-28 1Co 7:32-35,39,40 1Ti 4:3 5:11-15

The disciples *said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry

Ryrie - The disciples seemed to have understood that Christ was teaching a very restricted meaning of "immorality" and that He completely disallowed divorce of married persons. See note on 5:32. In turn, Christ acknowledges that the saying "it is better not to marry" is valid in some cases, and these are enumerated in verse 12--those congenitally incapable, those made incapable, and those who wish to devote themselves more completely to the service of God (1 Cor. 7:7, 8, 26, 32-35). Celibacy is an acceptable option.

NET NOTE - ‡ Some significant witnesses, along with the majority of later MSS (25 C D L W Z 078 f1, 13 33 lat sy samss bo), read α το (autou, “his”) after μαθηται (mathētai, “disciples”), but this looks to be a clarifying reading. Other early and important witnesses lack the pronoun (71vid κ B Θ e ff1 g1 sams mae), the reading adopted here. NA27 includes the pronoun in brackets, indicating doubts as to its authenticity.

QUESTION - [Why did the disciples conclude that it is better not to marry in Matthew 19:10?](#)

ANSWER - While Jesus was teaching and healing in Judea, some Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking Him a loaded question about marriage and the Law of Moses. Jesus' response caused the disciples to conclude that "it is better not to marry" (Matthew 19:10).

The Pharisees, trying to trap Jesus in a dilemma, asked Him whether it was lawful to divorce a wife for any reason (Matthew 19:3). They were trying to get Jesus to contradict Moses so they could brand Jesus as a false teacher. Of course, Jesus shrewdly responded by answering them with Scripture. Jesus reminded them that humanity was created male and female and that marriage was God's joining of the man and woman into one flesh; thus, no person could actually separate what God had united (Matthew 19:4–6). Jesus appealed to the design of marriage, implying that divorce was a violation of that design.

The Pharisees thought Jesus had taken the bait, and they questioned further why Moses allowed for divorce (Matthew 19:7). Jesus' answer was perhaps not what they expected. Jesus explained that Moses' allowance of divorce was a concession because of the people's hardness of heart, but divorce was never what was designed (Matthew 19:8). Jesus further explained that, if one divorces for any reason other than immorality (or unfaithfulness) and [marries someone else](#), then he or she is committing adultery (Matthew 19:9). Matthew did not record the Pharisees' response, but the disciples concluded that it is better not to marry (Matthew 19:10).

Jesus communicated that God's standard is high. Those who are married become one flesh and are united by God in a unique way. Only [unfaithfulness](#) by one partner could warrant the other partner's divorce and remarriage—and even that was a concession. Divorce was not the ideal and was not to be considered the guaranteed privilege of disgruntled men. The disciples, accustomed to the notion that divorce should be easy, shrank back from the idea of being stuck in an [unpleasant marriage](#). According to Jesus' teaching, a man who is displeased with his wife has no way out, and the disciples conclude it would be better not to marry than risk a life of unhappiness.

In answering the Pharisees' question, Jesus reiterated the seriousness of the marriage relationship as God has joined the husband and wife. That union was also affirmed by the married persons by their covenant with each other. To violate the covenant would be treachery (see Malachi 2:14–16). This is why the disciples conclude that it is better not to marry. They understood from Jesus' words that the marital commitment is a serious responsibility. Divorce was legally permitted for almost any reason, but Jesus explained that the husband had a weighty obligation no matter how easy it might be to legally divorce his wife.

Paul later explains in Ephesians 5:22–27 that the husband is to love his wife fully and unconditionally (illustrating Christ's sacrificial love for the church), and the wife is to subject herself to her own husband (illustrating the church's response to Christ). These unconditional responsibilities are incredibly serious and should not be undertaken lightly. Just as the disciples conclude that it is better not to marry, it would be wise for those pondering marriage to recognize how important marriage is to God and how He designed it to be a lifelong commitment. Perhaps some might also conclude that it is better not to marry.

Matthew 19:11 But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given."

- 1Co 7:2,7,9,17,35

But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given"

QUESTION - [Does the Bible teach that there is a gift of celibacy?](#)

ANSWER - Two passages in the New Testament are typically used to discuss what is sometimes called "the gift of celibacy." The first is Matthew 19:9–12, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." The disciples said to him, 'If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.' Jesus replied, 'Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.'

The phrase *only those to whom it has been given* refers to people receiving what some call "the gift of celibacy" or "the gift of singleness." Regardless of what we call the gift, Jesus teaches that most people do not naturally desire to remain single and celibate for a lifetime. Of the exceptions, two are physical, and one is ethical or religious: 1) some forego marriage due to their natural constitution—they are born with no desire to marry; 2) some do not marry because of some violent act perpetrated upon them by others; and 3) some, by the grace of God, have chosen to renounce marriage for the kingdom's sake. Such celibates have received a special gift from God.

The other pertinent passage is 1 Corinthians 7. In this chapter Paul states that it is not wrong to get married, but that it is better if a Christian can stay single. (The reason is that a married man's attention is "divided" between pleasing the Lord and pleasing his wife; a single man is free to be more focused on the Lord's work, verses 32-34.) Paul says, "I wish that all men were [unmarried] as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that" (verse 7). Paul is careful to state that this is "a concession, not . . . a command" (verse 6). The ability to stay single and serve God apart from marriage is a gift. Paul and some others had this gift, but not everyone.

As we see, the Bible does not explicitly call this "the gift of celibacy," but it does express that the ability to remain unmarried to serve God more fully is a gift. Most adults desire marriage, and this desire is not sinful. In fact, marriage can keep us from sin: "Since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2). Rather than engage in immorality, believers are to be married. Sex within marriage between one man and one woman or celibate singleness—these are the only two options for Christians.

Although the Bible does speak of celibacy as a gift, it is not listed with the spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12). Singleness is a gift that God gives everyone, at least temporarily. For some, the gift of singleness is permanent; for others, God takes that gift away and gives the gift of marriage in its place. The Bible encourages those who are celibate in Christian service that they are an important part of God's family.

Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about a Christian staying single?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about asexuality?](#)

Matthew 19:12 "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it."

- which were made: Isa 39:7 56:3,4
- which have: 1Co 7:32-38 9:5,15

For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it

Believer's Study Bible - This verse does not value celibacy or asceticism over the normal relationships of family life. Some are excluded from marriage by natural causes (v. 12a) and others by the violent action of men, i.e., they "were made eunuchs by men" (v. 12b). Some who serve the kingdom may discover themselves in circumstances in which they refrain from marriage or a second marriage by their own choice (v. 12c).

NET NOTE - The verb εὐχίζω occurs twice in this verse, translated the first time as "made eunuchs" and the second time as "became eunuchs." The term literally refers to castration. The second occurrence of the word in this verse is most likely figurative, though, referring to those who willingly maintain a life of celibacy for the furtherance of the kingdom (see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Matthew [ICC], 3:23).

QUESTION - [What is a eunuch in the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - The eunuchs of the Bible were usually castrated males or those incapable of reproduction due to a birth defect. A eunuch could also be someone who performed work typical of eunuchs, although he remained perfectly capable of having sex—i.e., "eunuch" in some cases was simply a title. The purpose of intentional castration was to induce impotence and remove sexuality. It was a common practice in ancient times for rulers to castrate some of their servants and/or advisers in order to subdue and pacify them. It was especially common to castrate men who tended the royal harem. Queen Esther's eunuchs are mentioned in Esther 4:4.

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus mentions eunuchs in the context of whether it is good to marry. He says, "There are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it." Jesus identifies three types of "eunuchs" here: natural eunuchs ("born that way"), forced eunuchs ("made eunuchs by others"), and voluntary eunuchs ("those who

choose”).

Natural eunuchs include those who are born with a physical defect, but they also comprise those who are born with no real desire for marriage or sex. Forced eunuchs are those who have been castrated for whatever reason. Voluntary eunuchs are those who, in order to better serve the Lord in some capacity, choose to forego marriage. God calls some people to remain single (and therefore celibate). Paul speaks of those who serve the Lord in their unmarried state in 1 Corinthians 7:7—9.

Some gay groups argue that Jesus was referring to homosexuals when He mentioned eunuchs who were “born that way.” However, the Bible never uses the words homosexual and eunuch interchangeably. Furthermore, eunuchs are never referred to in Scripture as being in sin, while homosexuality is universally condemned in both the Old and New Testaments.

Matthew 19:13 Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.

- brought: Mt 18:2-5 Ge 48:1,9-20 1Sa 1:24 Ps 115:14,15 Jer 32:39 Mk 10:13 Lu 18:15 Ac 2:39 1Co 7:14
- and the: Mt 16:22 20:31 Lu 9:49,50,54,55

Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.

NET NOTE - Grk “the disciples scolded them.” In the translation the referent has been specified as “those who brought them,” since otherwise the statement could be understood to mean that the disciples scolded the children rather than their parents who brought them.

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 19:13-15. It is well when we come to Christ ourselves, and bring our children. Little children may be brought to Christ as needing, and being capable of receiving blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession. We can but beg a blessing for them: Christ only can command the blessing. It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discountenance any willing, well-meaning souls, in their seeking after Christ, though they are but weak. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out. Therefore he takes it ill of all who forbid, and try to shut out those whom he has received. And all Christians should bring their children to the Saviour that he may bless them with spiritual blessings.

Matthew 19:14 But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

- Suffer: Ge 17:7,8,24-26 21:4 Jdg 13:7 1Sa 1:11,22,24 2:18 Mk 10:14 Lu 18:16,17
- for: Mt 11:25 18:3 1Co 14:20 1Pe 2:1,2

But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these

NET NOTE - The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Children are a picture of those whose simple trust illustrates what faith is all about. The remark illustrates how everyone is important to God, even those whom others regard as insignificant.

QUESTION - [Why did Jesus say, “Let the little children come to me”?](#)

ANSWER - At one point during Jesus’ earthly ministry, some [children](#) were brought to Him so that He could lay hands on them and pray for them (Matthew 19:13). The disciples tried to turn the children away, but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (verse 14). Mark 10:14 (KJV) adds that Jesus was “much displeased” with His disciples for their actions. He then blessed the children (Matthew 19:15).

There are two potentially puzzling elements to this story. First, why did the disciples try to keep the children away from Jesus? Also, what did Jesus mean when he said, “Let the little children come to me . . . for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”?

It is important to remember that children in Jesus’ time were not necessarily regarded as special or particularly endearing, except to their own parents. Many cultures today look on children as especially sweet, innocent, and even wise. Jewish culture in that day probably did not see children in such optimistic terms. The disciples most likely rebuked those bringing the children to Jesus

because they felt bringing children to Jesus was socially improper or because they thought the children would bother Jesus. It is likely that their move to hinder the parents from bringing their children to Jesus was motivated not by unkindness but by a desire to respect Jesus' position as a teacher. But Jesus wanted the children to come to Him. He said, "Let the children come," because He wanted to bless them.

It is wonderful to think of Jesus interacting with a child. Children are needy and dependent, and they know almost nothing about life. They function mostly on emotion rather than reason. Yet Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). Scripture often compares believers to children (e.g., Luke 10:21; Galatians 4:19; 1 John 4:4). In fact, Jesus told those following Him, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3-4; cf. Mark 10:15).

Jesus' command to "let the little children come to me" reveals several truths: 1) Children need to be blessed by the Lord. 2) The Lord wants to bless children. 3) Parents should be encouraged to bring their children to Jesus at an early age and teach them His ways. 4) Jesus has regard for the weakest and most vulnerable among us. 5) No matter how compassionate Jesus' followers are, Jesus Himself is more compassionate still. 6) Those who come to Christ must do so in childlike [humility](#), [faith](#), and simplicity.

'Like children who implicitly trust their parents, believers trust God. Faith is not about knowing everything or doing everything right. It is about knowing that, no matter what happens, our Father will take care of us. That trust in Him, even when life is terrifying and sad and makes no sense, is what makes a believer like a child. "All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37). God loves His children.

Related Resources:

- [How did Jesus interact with children?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus loves the little children?](#)

Matthew 19:15 After laying His hands on them, He departed from there.

- Isa 40:11 Mk 10:16 1Co 7:14 2Ti 3:15

After laying His hands on them, He departed from there

Matthew 19:16 And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"

- one: Mk 10:17 Lu 18:18
- what: Lu 10:25 Jn 6:27-29 Ac 16:30
- eternal: Mt 25:46 Da 12:2 Jn 3:15 4:14 5:39 6:47,68 10:28 12:25 17:2,3 Ro 2:7 5:21 6:22,23 1Ti 1:16 6:12,19 Tit 1:2 3:7 1Jn 1:2 2:25 1Jn 5:11-13,20 Jude 1:21

And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life"

NET NOTE - Grk "And behold one came." The Greek word $\delta\omicron\upsilon$ (idou) has not been translated because it has no exact English equivalent here, but adds interest and emphasis (BDAG 468 s.v. 1). Here $\kappa\alpha\iota$ (kai) has been translated as "now" to indicate the transition to a new topic.

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 19:16-22. Christ knew that covetousness was the sin which most easily beset this young man; though he had got honestly what he possessed, yet he could not cheerfully part with it, and by this his want of sincerity was shown. Christ's promises make his precepts easy, and his yoke pleasant and very comfortable; yet this promise was as much a trial of the young man's faith, as the precept was of his charity and contempt of the world. It is required of us in following Christ, that we duly attend his ordinances, strictly follow his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposals; and this from love to him, and in dependence on him. To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, but we are to follow Christ. The gospel is the only remedy for lost sinners. Many abstain from gross vices who do not attend to their obligations to God. Thousands of instances of disobedience in thought, word, and deed, are marked against them in the book of God. Thus numbers forsake Christ, loving this present world: they feel convictions and desires, but they depart sorrowful, perhaps trembling. It behoves us to try ourselves in these matters, for the Lord will try us.

Matthew 19:17 And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

- there: 1Sa 2:2 Ps 52:1 145:7-9 Jas 1:17 1Jn 4:8-10,16
- but: Lev 18:5 Eze 20:11,12 Lu 10:26-28 Ro 10:5 Ga 3:11-13

And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments

QUESTION [Why did Jesus tell the rich young ruler he could be saved by obeying the commandments?](#)

ANSWER - To understand Jesus’ response to the rich young ruler’s question—“What must I do to be saved?”—we must consider three things: the background of the rich young ruler, the purpose of his question, and the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The young man had asked Jesus, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). Jesus responded, “If you want to enter life, keep the commandments” (verse 17). At first glance, it appears that Jesus is saying that the young man and, by extension, all people must obey the commandments in order to be saved. But is that really what He was saying? Since the essence of the salvation message is that we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9), why would Jesus offer the rich young ruler an “alternative plan”?

The story of the rich young ruler is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew 19:16–23, Mark 10:17–22, and Luke 18:18–23. The man is described as a “ruler,” which means he was a prince or magistrate of some sort. Since no Roman ruler would address Jesus as “teacher” or “master,” it is assumed that this man was a Jewish ruler in the local synagogue. This man also had “great wealth” (Matthew 19:22), and Jesus later used His conversation with this man to teach the detrimental effect money can have on one’s desire for eternal life (verses 23–24). The lesson Jesus draws from this incident concerns money, not salvation by works.

The first thing Jesus says to the man’s greeting, “Good teacher,” is to remind him that no one is good except God (Matthew 19:17). Jesus was not denying His own divinity. Rather, Jesus was immediately getting the man to think about what “good” really means—since only God is good, then what we normally call human goodness might be something else entirely. This truth comes into play later in the conversation. When the man asked Jesus to specify which commandments he should keep, Jesus recited six of the commandments, including “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:19). The man replies, “All these I have kept. . . . What do I still lack?” (verse 20), and that is a key statement. The young man was obviously religious and sincere in his pursuit of righteousness. His problem was that he considered himself to be faultless concerning the Law. And this is the point that Jesus challenges.

Jesus tells the man, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21). The young man decided that Jesus was asking too much. “He went away sad, because he had great wealth” (verse 22). Rather than obey Jesus’ instructions, he turned his back on the Lord and walked away. The man’s choice undoubtedly saddened Jesus as well, because Jesus loved him (Mark 10:21).

In telling the young man to keep the commandments, Jesus was not saying that he could be saved by obeying the commandments; rather, Jesus was emphasizing the Law as God’s perfect standard. *If* you can keep the Law perfectly, then you can escape sin’s penalty—but that’s a big *if*. When the man responded that he met the Law’s standard, Jesus simply touched on one issue that proved the man did not measure up to God’s holiness. The man was not willing to follow the Lord, if that meant he must give up his wealth. Thus, the man was breaking the two [greatest commands](#); he did not love the Lord with all his heart, and he did not love his neighbor as himself. He loved himself (and his money) more. Far from keeping “all” the commandments, as he had claimed, the man was a sinner like everyone else. The Law proved it.

If the man had loved God and other people more than he did his property, he would have been willing to give up his wealth to the service of God and man. But that was not the case. He had made an idol of his wealth, and he loved it more than God. With surgical precision, Jesus exposes the greed in the man’s heart—greed the man did not even suspect he had. Jesus’ statement that only God is good (Matthew 19:17) is proved in the young man’s response to Jesus’ command.

In His conversation with the rich young ruler, Christ did not teach that we are saved by the works of the Law. The Bible’s message is that salvation is by [grace](#) through faith (Romans 3:20, 28; 4:6; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:9; 2 Timothy 1:9). Rather, Jesus used the man’s love of money to show how the man fell short of God’s holy standard—as do we all. The rich young ruler needed the Savior, and so do we.

Matthew 19:18 Then he *said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS;

- Which: Ga 3:10 Jas 2:10,11
- Thou shalt do: Mt 5:21-28 Ex 20:12-17 De 5:16-21 Mk 10:19 Lu 18:20 Ro 13:8-10

Then he *said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS

Matthew 19:19 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

- Honour: Mt 15:4-6 Lev 19:3 Pr 30:17 Eph 6:1,2
- Thou: Mt 22:39 Lev 19:18 Lu 10:27 Ro 13:9 Ga 5:14 Jas 2:8

Related Passages:

Exodus 20:12-16 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 “You shall not murder. 14 “You shall not commit adultery. 15 “You shall not steal. 16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Deuteronomy 5:16-20 ‘Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the LORD your God gives you. 17 ‘You shall not murder. 18 ‘You shall not commit adultery. 19 ‘You shall not steal. 20 ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

Matthew 19:20 The young man *said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?”

- All: Mk 10:20 Lu 15:7,29 18:11,12,21 Jn 8:7 Ro 3:19-23 7:9 Ga 3:24 Php 3:6
- what: Mk 10:21 Lu 18:22

The young man *said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking

NET NOTE - Grk “kept.” The implication of this verb is that the man has obeyed the commandments without fail, so the adverb “wholeheartedly” has been added to the translation to bring out this nuance. While the rich man was probably being sincere when he insisted I have wholeheartedly obeyed all these laws, he had confined his righteousness to external obedience. The rich man’s response to Jesus’ command—to give away all he had—revealed that internally he loved money more than God.

Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

- If: Mt 5:19,20,48 Ge 6:9 17:1 Job 1:1 Ps 37:37 Lu 6:40 Php 3:12-15
- go: Mt 6:19,20 Mk 10:21 Lu 12:33 14:33 16:9 18:22 Ac 2:45 4:32-35 1Ti 6:17-19 Heb 10:34
- come: Mt 19:28 4:19 8:22 9:9 16:24 Mk 2:14 8:34 10:21 Lu 5:27 9:23 18:22 Jn 10:27 12:26

Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow (akoloutheo) Me

Believer’s Study Bible - Jesus does not teach that salvation is ever achieved by divesting oneself of all possessions, even for charitable purposes. However, this youthful inquirer had one concern that was far greater than his desire to have life eternal. His possessions occupied the position of primary devotion in his life. Until he could persuade himself to be willing to seek God regardless of the cost (cf. 6:33), he could never discover eternal life. Therefore, Jesus suggested the selling of his possessions.

NET NOTE - The call for sacrifice comes with a promise of eternal reward: You will have treasure in heaven. Jesus’ call is a test to

see how responsive the man is to God's direction through him. Will he walk the path God's agent calls him to walk? For a rich person who got it right, see Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10.

Matthew 19:22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.

- he went: Mt 13:22 14:9 Jdg 18:23,24 Da 6:14-17 Mk 6:26 10:22 Lu 18:23 Jn 19:12-16
- for: Mt 6:24 16:26 Ps 17:14 Eze 33:31 Eph 5:5 Col 3:5

But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property

Henry Morris - No matter how outwardly righteous a person may be, he can only be saved if he comes to Christ with nothing of his own. The Lord may not ask a follower to give up his possessions or anything else, but maybe He will. That person must at least be willing to do so. We cannot bargain with God. We are dead in sins until He saves us; only Christ can give us life.

NET NOTE - Grk "he had many possessions." This term (κτ μᾶ, ktēma) is often used for land as a possession.

Matthew 19:23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

- That: Mt 13:22 De 6:10-12 8:10-18 Job 31:24,25 Ps 49:6,7,16-19 Pr 11:28 Pr 30:8,9 Mk 10:23 Lu 12:15-21 16:13,14,19-28 18:24 1Co 1:26 1Ti 6:9,10 Jas 1:9-11 2:6 5:1-4
- enter: Mt 5:20 18:3 21:31 Jn 3:3,5 Ac 14:22

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven

Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 19:23-30. Though Christ spoke so strongly, few that have riches do not trust in them. How few that are poor are not tempted to envy! But men's earnestness in this matter is like their toiling to build a high wall to shut themselves and their children out of heaven. It should be satisfaction to those who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition. If they live more hardly in this world than the rich, yet, if they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. Christ's words show that it is hard for a rich man to be a good Christian, and to be saved. The way to heaven is a narrow way to all, and the gate that leads into it, a strait gate; particularly so to rich people. More duties are expected from them than from others, and more sins easily beset them. It is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world. Rich people have a great account to make up for their opportunities above others. It is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches, to get to heaven. Christ used an expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the power of man. Nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. Who then can be saved? If riches hinder rich people, are not pride and sinful lusts found in those not rich, and as dangerous to them? Who can be saved? say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. The beginning, progress, and perfecting the work of salvation, depend wholly on the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. Not that rich people can be saved in their worldliness, but that they should be saved from it. Peter said, We have forsaken all. Alas! it was but a poor all, only a few boats and nets; yet observe how Peter speaks, as if it had been some mighty thing. We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, our expenses and losses, for Christ. However, Christ does not upbraid them; though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their all, and as dear to them as if it had been more. Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; he accepts according to what a man hath. Our Lord's promise to the apostles is, that when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, he will make all things new, and they shall sit with him in judgement on those who will be judged according to their doctrine. This sets forth the honour, dignity, and authority of their office and ministry. Our Lord added, that every one who had forsaken possessions or comforts, for his sake and the gospel, would be recompensed at last. May God give us faith to rest our hope on this his promise; then we shall be ready for every service or sacrifice. Our Saviour, in the last verse, does away a mistake of some. The heavenly inheritance is not given as earthly ones are, but according to God's pleasure. Let us not trust in promising appearances or outward profession. Others may, for aught we know, become eminent in faith and holiness.

Matthew 19:24 "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

- It: So in the Koran, "The impious, who in his arrogance shall accuse our doctrine of falsity, shall find the gates of heaven shut; nor shall he enter till a camel shall pass through the eye of a needle." It was a common mode of expression among the Jews to declare any thing that was rare or difficult. Mt 19:26 23:24 Jer 13:23 Mk 10:24,25 Lu 18:25 Jn 5:44

Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God

NET NOTE - The eye of a needle refers to a sewing needle. (The gate in Jerusalem known as "The Needle's Eye" was built during the middle ages and was not in existence in Jesus' day.) Jesus was saying rhetorically that it is impossible for a rich person to enter God's kingdom, unless God (v. 26) intervenes.

Matthew 19:25 When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"

- Who: Mt 24:22 Mk 13:20 Lu 13:23,24 Ro 10:13 11:5-7

When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved

NET NOTE - The assumption is that the rich are blessed, so if they risk exclusion, who is left to be saved?

Matthew 19:26 And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

- but: Ge 18:14 Nu 11:23 Job 42:2 Ps 3:8 62:11 Jer 32:27 Zec 8:6 Mk 10:27 Lu 1:37 18:27

And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible

QUESTION - [What does "with men this is impossible" mean \(Matthew 19:26\)?](#)

ANSWER - On His final journey to Jerusalem before His death, Jesus encountered a rich young man who asked what he must do to receive eternal life (Matthew 19:16–30). Jesus took the opportunity to teach His disciples about the dangers of acquiring wealth and possessions, which can often hinder one's faith. Anything that gets in the way of our commitment to following God must be forsaken (see verse 21). When Jesus stressed how hard it was for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of heaven, the disciples were utterly astounded. They had adopted the prevailing belief that [wealth](#) was evidence of God's favor. "Then who in the world can be saved?" the disciples asked (verse 25, NLT).

Looking at them intently, Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26, NKJV). Jesus presented the key to salvation. In and of themselves, humans do not have what it takes to enter the kingdom of heaven. A person may possess every earthly blessing but remains powerless to save himself. Salvation is God's gift alone (Romans 5:15–16).

Riches tend to make us self-reliant, self-centered, and distracted by worldly pursuits. We put too much confidence in ourselves and our wealth and lose our childlike trust and reliance on the goodness and mercy of God. Nonetheless, it is humanly impossible to earn our way or work our way into heaven: "But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life" (Titus 3:4–7, NLT).

When Jesus said, "With men this is impossible," He meant that it is only by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ that a person can be saved (Ephesians 2:4–9; see also Acts 15:11; 16:30–31; Romans 3:21–24; 5:1–2; 11:5–6). Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6; John 10:9; Hebrews 10:19–20; 1 Timothy 2:5). "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Belief in Jesus changes what is humanly impossible into unlimited possibilities with God. Through [faith in Jesus Christ](#), mere mortals receive "the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12–13). As God's children, we receive the indescribably good gift of eternal life (John 3:15–16; Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 9:15).

Job and others in Scripture asked similar questions as the disciples, “How then can a mortal be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure?” (Job 25:4; see also 1 Samuel 6:20; Job 4:17–19; 9:2; 15:14–16; Psalm 130:3; Psalm 143:2; Malachi 3:2; Revelation 6:17). Apart from the Lord’s intervention, becoming righteous before God is hopeless. With men, this is impossible! But with God, “we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God’s glory” (Romans 5:1–2, NLT).

With men this is impossible means there’s no place in God’s kingdom for boasting about our own righteousness (Romans 3:27–30; 1 Corinthians 1:28–31). The apostle Paul expounded, “I have been [crucified with Christ](#) and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” (Galatians 2:20–21). Paul continued, “As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world’s interest in me has also died” (Galatians 6:14, NLT).

With men this is impossible affirms that any form of self-justification is useless. We can’t buy our way into heaven or work our way into God’s kingdom. The believer’s only hope of salvation—his only confidence in drawing near to God—is in God Himself, with whom all things are possible.

Matthew 19:27 Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?”

- we have forsaken: Mt 4:20-22 9:9 De 33:9 Mk 1:17-20 2:14 10:28 Lu 5:11,27,28 14:33 Lu 18:28 Php 3:8
- what: Mt 20:10-12 Lu 15:29 1Co 1:29 4:7

WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed ([akoloutheo](#)) You - Peter gives us an accurate descriptive definition of a genuine disciple of (believer in) Jesus

What then will there be for us

NET NOTE - Peter wants reassurance that the disciples’ response and sacrifice have been noticed.

Matthew 19:28 And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- in the regeneration: Isa 65:17 66:22 Ac 3:21 2Pe 3:13 Rev 21:5
- when: Mt 16:27 25:31 2Th 1:7-10 Rev 20:11-15
- ye also: Mt 20:21 Lu 22:28-30 1Co 6:2,3 2Ti 2:12 Rev 2:26,27 3:21
- the twelve: Ex 15:27 24:4 28:21 Lev 24:5 Jos 3:12 1Ki 18:31 Ezr 6:17 Rev 7:4 Rev 12:1 21:12-14 22:2

And Jesus said to them, “Truly (amen) I say to you, that you who have followed ([akoloutheo](#)) Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel

Henry Morris - The "regeneration" is the "re-creation," or "restoration," of the primeval perfections of the earth before the Genesis Flood. This will happen after Christ’s return.

NET NOTE - The Greek term translated the age when all things are renewed ([πολιγγενεσία](#), *palingenesia*) is understood as a reference to the Messianic age, the time when all things are renewed and restored (cf. Rev 21:5). The statement you ... will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel looks at the future authority the Twelve will have when Jesus returns. They will share in Israel’s judgment.

Matthew 19:29 “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. 30“But many who are first will be last; and the

last, first.

- every: Mt 16:25 Mk 10:29,30 Lu 18:29,30 1Co 2:9
- or brethren: Mt 8:21,22 10:37,38 Lu 14:26 2Co 5:16 Php 3:8
- my: Mt 5:11 10:22 Lu 6:22 Jn 15:19 Ac 9:16 1Pe 4:14 3Jn 1:7
- an: Mt 13:8,23
- inherit: Mt 19:16 25:34,46

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. 30“But many who are first will be last; and the last, first

Matthew 19:30 “But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

- Mt 8:11,12 20:16 21:31,32 Mk 10:31 Lu 7:29,30 13:30 18:13,14 Ro 5:20,21 9:30-33 Ga 5:7 Heb 4:1

But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

QUESTION - [What did Jesus mean when He said the first will be last and the last will be first?WATCH VIDEO](#)

ANSWER - Jesus made the statement “many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matthew 19:30) in the context of His encounter with the [rich young ruler](#) (Matthew 19:16–30). After the young man turned away from Jesus, unable to give up his great wealth (verse 22), Jesus’ disciples asked the Lord what reward they would have in heaven, since they had given up everything to follow Him (verses 27–30). Jesus promised them “a hundred times as much,” plus eternal life (verse 29). Then He said, “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (verse 30).

Jesus reiterated this truth in Matthew 20:16 at the end of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, a story designed to illustrate the last being first and the first being last. What exactly did Jesus mean when He said, “Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first”? First, we should eliminate what He did *not* mean. Jesus was not teaching that the way to get to heaven is to live a life of poverty in this world. Scripture is clear that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works (Ephesians 2:8–9)—and independent of one’s financial status. Also, Jesus was not teaching an automatic reversal of roles in heaven. There is no heavenly law wherein the poor and oppressed must rule over the rich and powerful. The rich aren’t *always* last in heaven, and the poor aren’t *always* first. Nor will believers who enjoy wealth and prestige on earth be required to somehow be abased in heaven. Earthly rank will not automatically translate into an inverse heavenly rank.

When Jesus told the disciples they would be greatly rewarded in heaven for what they had given up on earth, He was contrasting their sacrifice with the rich young ruler’s lack thereof—the young man had been unwilling to give up much of anything for Christ’s sake (Matthew 19:16–22). God, who sees the heart, will reward accordingly. The disciples are an example of those who may be first, and they happened to be poor (but their poverty was not what makes them first in heaven). The rich young ruler is an example of those who may be last, and he happened to be rich (but his wealth was not what makes him last).

The Lord’s statement that the last would be first and the first last might also have held special meaning for Peter, who had just spoken of having “left all” (Matthew 19:27). Perhaps Jesus detected in Peter’s statement a bit of boasting—Peter was on the verge of becoming spiritually complacent—as the rich young ruler was, but for a different reason. Jesus’ response in verse 30 may have been an indirect warning to Peter to always find his sufficiency in Christ, not in his own sacrifice. After all, without love, even the greatest sacrifice is worthless (1 Corinthians 13:3).

In the chapter following Jesus’ statement that the first will be last and the last will be first, Jesus tells a parable (Matthew 20). The story concerns some laborers who complain that others, who did not work as long as they, were paid an equal amount. In other words, they saw their own labor as worthy of compensation but considered their companions’ labor to be inferior and less worthy of reward. Jesus ends the parable with the statement, “The last will be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16). The most direct interpretation, based on the content of the parable, is that all believers, no matter how long or how hard they work during this lifetime, will receive the same basic reward: eternal life. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43), whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as did Timothy, who served God for years. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different rewards in heaven for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life will be given to all equally, on the basis of God’s grace in Christ Jesus.

There are several ways in which “the first will be last and the last first” holds true. There are some who were first to follow Christ

time yet are not the first in the kingdom. Judas Iscariot was one of the first disciples and was honored to be the treasurer of the group, yet his greed led to his undoing; Paul was the last of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:8–9) yet the one who worked the hardest (2 Corinthians 11:23). There are some who were first *in privilege* yet are not first in the kingdom. Based on the terms of the New Covenant, the Gentiles had equal access to the kingdom of heaven, although they had not served God under the Old Covenant. The Jews, who had labored long under the Old Covenant, were jealous of the grace extended to the Gentile “newcomers” (see Romans 11:11). There are some who are first *in prestige and rank* yet might never enter the kingdom. Jesus told the Pharisees that the sinners they despised were being saved ahead of them: “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matthew 21:31–32).

What Jesus is teaching in Matthew 19:30 is this: there will be many surprises in heaven. Heaven’s value system is far different from earth’s value system. Those who are esteemed and respected in this world (like the rich young ruler) may be frowned upon by God. The opposite is also true: those who are despised and rejected in this world (like the disciples) may, in fact, be rewarded by God. Don’t get caught up in the world’s way of ranking things; it’s too prone to error. Those who are first in the opinion of others (or first in their own opinion!) may be surprised to learn, on Judgment Day, they are last in God’s opinion.