



## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

### **Mark 10:2-16 Jesus speaks about divorce (5 September)**

This passage begins a section of Mark's gospel in which Jesus speaks about the way in which the values of the kingdom of God relate to some of the most basic ingredients of life: marriage and divorce, children and wealth.

The Pharisees try to trap Jesus into saying something which will incriminate him. In essence, they are asking what grounds for divorce can be legitimately acted upon while remaining in God's good favour? In reply, Jesus presents a fundamental principle as he teaches the crowds, and then gives further explanation to his disciples when they ask for it.

These verses assume divorce's reality – marriages break down – and all Jews accepted that it was legal; they debated only its grounds. Jesus makes it clear that Moses' aim in Deut 14:1-4 was to deal with situations brought about by people's hard-heartedness (their failure to have their hearts in tune with God's best intention and plan) and to protect vulnerable people from its worst effects. Alongside that acknowledgement of human failings, Jesus refers to Gen 1 & 2 and presents God's ideal: the very close, unbreakable bond which men and women were created to enjoy (v.6-8). Divorce breaks that oneness which God intended. Although, elsewhere, Jesus does permit divorce in certain circumstances (Mat 5:32, 19:9 – see also 1 Cor 7:15), here he is presenting just the basic principle.

Jewish tradition, as indicated in Deut 24, only allowed a man to divorce a woman – not vice versa – and, by the time of Jesus, men were interpreting Deut 24:1 in a way that allowed them to divorce their wives for trivial reasons, such as finding a more attractive woman or his wife spoiling his meal. Jesus' answer would protect women from that sort of abuse; and, in v.12, Jesus raises the possibility of a woman divorcing a man – again reflecting the way in which his treatment of women was radically new.

1. What, from Jesus' teaching and from your experience, is good about marriage? About singleness?
2. The disciples' approach and thinking had been influenced by their environment and contemporary world? How far should what the world thinks about marriage, divorce and related issues of sexuality influence the church?

3. What is God's purpose in v.6-9 for human sexuality?
4. What do you think that Gen 2:24 says about marriage?
5. What can be the bad consequences of divorce?
6. What could be the bad consequences of not allowing divorce?
7. What does Jesus reveal about God in v.13-16?
8. Who are the children in v.14? In what sense is the Kingdom theirs? How might this influence our attitude to children in our church?
9. What does it mean to receive the Kingdom of God like a child (v.15)?

### **Relationships in a broken world**



Take 5 minutes to reflect on this picture – .....then share.