

Week of January 22-28

FIREPROOF

Scripture Reading: Read Matthew chapter 19

Several years ago, Sherwood Pictures produced a wonderful and touching movie about marriage entitled, "Fireproof." For those who haven't seen the movie, the main plot line focuses on a young couple, Caleb and Catherine, who are on the verge of divorce. He is caught up with his work as a firefighter, his dream of owning a boat and a pornography addiction. She is lonely and begins looking for love and support from another man. Caleb's father challenges his son to take a 40-day "Love Dare" with the hope of restoring the marriage. During the process, Caleb comes to Christ and the Lord restores their marriage.

The issue of divorce and the struggles in marriage are not new to the 21st century. They were raised in the 1st century as well. Our chapter reading today opens with a challenge by the Pharisees to Jesus regarding marriage. They wanted to know if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason. This was a question that had been debated by the rabbis for years. One school of thought believed that marriage should not be dissolved unless there was some type of gross indecency, although not necessarily adultery. Another school of thought believed that a marriage could end in divorce for something as petty as if a man's wife burned his soup or if he found another woman prettier than his own.

In his response, Jesus takes the Pharisees back to God's original intention for marriage as described in the book of Genesis and lays out some principles that, if followed, would "fireproof" a marriage.

- 1) **Designer of marriage** - Marriage was God's idea, not ours, and was part of his good creation. Marriage is to be lived out according to his kingdom principles (*like the principle of forgiveness from yesterday's devotion!*)
- 2) **Definition of marriage** - Marriage is between one man and one woman and we don't have the right to tamper with his definition
- 3) **Development of marriage** – Couples are to leave their own families both physically and emotionally to cleave to each other with the goal of weaving together a life as one; one physically, emotionally, materially and spiritually
- 4) **Duration of marriage** – as long as we both shall live and not as long as we both shall love. Love is a choice we make every day of our married lives.

The Pharisees wanted Jesus' take on divorce. Instead, he gave them his Father's take on marriage. His words still resonate today. In an age of disposable marriages, high divorce rates and serial monogamy, it's important that we hear what the Creator intended for the marriage relationship and to follow his Word. Marriage was meant to be a taste of heaven on earth for it was meant to reflect the relationship that Christ has with his bride, the church. It's worth fireproofing your marriage to have it.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Fireproof your marriage today by committing yourself to kingdom living in prayer. If it's already ended, seek the Lord's forgiveness, if necessary, and ask the Lord to direct you according to kingdom principles in the future.

Take-a-way: *Fireproof your marriage today to protect against a fire tomorrow.*