Marriage As God Intended

"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matthew 19:3).

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6).

"And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; 2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. 3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. 10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. 11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matthew 19:1-12).

In this lesson, we examine the salient truths on Jesus's teaching on marriage and divorce:

1) Just as it is in contemporary times, people who were not seeking to know the truth but were looking for grounds to entrap Jesus, posed him questions;

2) Jesus' response was not based on the norms of the society at the time but rather on how God intended marriage to be, from the beginning. Sticking to original divine intent can save us from many problems today;

3) Note the following salient points in God's original intent as expounded by Jesus in this scripture (a) male and female, (b) leave and cleave, (c) become one flesh, (d) joined together by God, and (e) let not man put asunder;

4) This standard was definitely different from the common experience at the time, so the pharisees came back with a follow-on question in verse 7 as to why Moses permitted divorce;

5) Jesus' answer in verses 8-9 shows that permissive will and deviations from God's original standard do not make the practice right;

6) The disciples question in verse 10 shows that they felt God's standard was not practicable, based on their experiences of prevalent practices;

7) Jesus in His response pointed out the fallacy of their thinking and clarified the three permissible categories of eunuchs:

   (a) born as eunuchs;

   (b) made eunuch by men (e.g. by kings, as doctrine of celibacy was not in existence);

   (c) made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

Similar errors still persist today. In the light of 1 Corinthians 7:4,5 it is not right for a wife or husband to make his/her spouse an eunuch by denial of marital privileges. "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife, 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency". God's grace is still sufficient to keep God's original standards.