

This chapter begins with teaching on divorce, a difficult subject then and still one today. But the Lord ends with a radical statement: *Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.* Why is this radical?

Deuteronomy 24, the basis of the dispute, spells out the regulations for a man divorcing his wife. But it makes no provision for a woman divorcing her husband. And the rabbinical teaching of Jesus' time held that a woman could commit adultery against her husband, but a man was liable for adultery only if committed with a married woman because then another man was the injured party. The scale was tipped toward men.

Now Jesus introduces exactly the same principle for the wife as the husband, the husband as the wife. That symmetric view was a revolutionary change.

It would be false to say that Christian teaching asserts complete equivalence between men and women. They are given different roles under some circumstances. But Scripture does maintain equality between the sexes in many places.

Intimate relations for one: *For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does* (1 Corinthians 7:4). Again, the rule is the same both ways.

They share a mutual dependence: *Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God* (1 Corinthians 11:11-12).

And, most important, they are equal participants in Christ: *... there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Questions:

1. The beginning of this passage finds the Lord and the disciples in the region of Perea, east of the Jordan, near the location where John the Baptist was imprisoned and executed. How does this explain why the Pharisees ask about divorce?
2. What clarification does Jesus give on the law concerning divorce?
3. How does God see marriage? List some principles.

4. Why do you think the disciples try to keep the children away from the Lord?

5. What is the underlying attitude of the rich young man?

6. Explain verse 18.

7. How can the young man be saved?

8. What are the points the Lord is teaching in verses 23-27?

9. What is the Lord saying in verses 29-31?