

**WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER**  
**February 14, 2016 morning service**  
**Matthew 19:1-6**

Take your Bible this morning quickly and go to Matthew's gospel chapter 19. In a moment I'll read the first six verses. You'll see it come up on the screen. This is the last in the series of messages with that word together, together, together, unifying the body of Christ. Jesus has asked a burning and vexing question in Matthew 19. Hear the word of the Lord.

*When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there. Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking [here's the question], "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 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'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. [Then read this phrase with me together.] What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."<sup>1</sup>*

Marriage is the total union of two personalities. It is the sharing of all circumstances of life. When moonlight and roses become kitchen sinks and crying children, then you share that together. The first time I saw this video I said, "If that old man doesn't come sit in that chair, I'm killing somebody." It's a journey. You walk it together.

I want to talk about when God joins us together. What God's joined together. These Pharisees ask that burning question. "Is it ever right for a man to divorce his wife?" and Jesus deals with the divorce issue in Matthew 19. I read through verse 6 but He goes on through verse 12 and deals with this issue. So this morning I want us to think about God joining us together. Tonight, as I said, Liz and I will be right here together. Stan and Kristen will be over here together. Jon and Beth Dubois, they'll be over here together. If you'd like to come with your sweetheart and just have a moment of prayer, we'll be glad to do that with you tonight. When we get to the 18<sup>th</sup> of December this year, Liz and I are going to preach on a Sunday night. It'll be our 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December. Then we're going to throw ourselves a party over in the gym and invite all of you to come eat cake.

I called my momma and daddy this week and the 12<sup>th</sup>, the day before yesterday, they'd been married 66 years, joined together. I called and momma wasn't home. Daddy was. "How're you doing?" "What?" I said, "How are you doing?!" "She's not here." I said, "I didn't ask if she was here." I think that's how they made it that long. Selective hearing. Hey, it's a journey, isn't it? It's a journey. Up, down, high, low. It's a

---

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

journey. I want us to think about that journey today. When God joins us together, together. That's what Jesus said in this text. So they're no longer two but one and what God joins together, let no man tear it apart.

Well let's look at five truths about marriage today. First of all the makeup, the makeup of marriage. He said in verse 4, "Have you not read" over in Genesis 1:27 and in Genesis 5:2, "that He created them from the beginning and He made them male and female?" The makeup of marriage, Jesus speaks to it here and it says it's a man and a woman that gets married. That's the makeup of marriage. Now there's a lot of talk today about marriage being something different because we want to make the man and the woman the same. We just want to make them identical.

There's a bill before Congress right now dealing, not just with marriage, but with the military, that in selective service, those that have to identify for the draft if we ever instituted it again that we would not just send the men but we'd send the women. Even Senator McCain voted for that this week, or spoke for it. I couldn't believe he did that. You see, there is something innate in us about the man that would protect the lady. Now you don't have to like that but I'm doing the preaching today. God made us male and He made us female. There's no man that has ever given birth to a child because if that ever happened everybody would be an only child. No man would go through that again, alright?

We're different. There's a distinction, male and female. That's not evil. That's not bad. That's God's design. He made them male and female. There is the makeup of marriage and it is a man and a woman come together. One man with one woman for one life. It's God's plan. It's His ideal. We don't always live up to the ideal but that's God's standard. God didn't set a low standard. He set a high standard. We're not to look down at God. We look up to God's standard saying we couldn't do it for the help and grace of God. The makeup of marriage is male and female.

Secondly He spoke of the miracle of marriage where He says in this text: *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* This is the miracle of God, two becoming one. A man and a woman, they become one physically. They become one emotionally. They become one. Now watch this. They become one spiritually. That's why a Christian man should only marry a Christian woman. You should not be unequally yoked together because a believer and a non-believer can be one physically, they can be one emotionally, but they cannot be one spiritually. The miracle is when God puts us all together and makes two to be one. Not only in the physical context and not only the emotional and the mental context, but in the spiritual context of our life so that we share everything in our body, in our soul, and in our spirit. This is the miracle of marriage when God makes us one.

My buddy, Andy Andrews, I love Brother Andy. He sent out a text yesterday and he said, "Hey guys. I know you've got the flowers. I know you've got the candy. You've got your card and all." He said, "But if you really want to shine on Valentine's,

get you a can of spray paint and in the night go out in the brown grass or on the rocks if you have a dirt driveway or somehow and just draw a heart with your name and hers, put an arrow through you and say 'I love you' and let her find it the next morning."

I got in about midnight last night and I went and found the kids' chalk. Our grandkids draw on everything we've got outside. There's a red piece of chalk in there so right by Liz's car this morning I drew a big heart and colored it in with an arrow in it, I love you, and put our names in there. I was just getting ready to come and she was getting – she leaves after I do and I got a text this morning. She said, "I found the heart, you crazy man." I immediately sent Andy a text. I said, "It worked!" He sent me back one and said, "Woot, woot." There's something about being one. One. One. It's the miracle of marriage and only God can make it happen.

There's the makeup. There's the miracle. Thirdly, there's the mandate. Now look at this mandate. He says, "Let no man separate." Now this is God's ideal. The Bible says in Malachi 2:16, "God hates divorce." The Jewish tradition says that when a husband and a wife divorce, the altar weeps. No one gets in marriage to get out. I recognize there are scores of people that sit here today that have been married and have been divorced and now remarried or still single and you didn't sign up and get in it to get out. God hates it. You hated it. The altar weeps and you have wept because it hurts. God's mandate is this. If He's put it together and make sure He put it together, let no man separate it. Fight for it. Claw for it. Work for it. It is God's ideal that one man, one woman stay together for life. It is the mandate. What God's joined together, let no man separate.

Fourthly, this text speaks of not only the makeup, the miracle, the mandate, but the misses in marriage because divorce does happen. It happens in this church. It happens in our culture. It happens in your family. It happens in mine. So they asked Jesus in verse 7. *"Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" 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. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."*

Now there were two schools of thought in the Jewish mindset of these Pharisees that came to Jesus. There was Shammai, the rabbi and there was the Hillel rabbi, these two men and they had mindsets. Shammai said, "Only by sexual immorality could you ever be divorced," but on the Hillel side there was a more lax attitude of saying there were other reasons that divorce could come. Now we understand God's ideal is one man for one woman for one life but divorce comes. Jesus said it comes because of the hardness of the heart. Somebody's heart gets hard. It comes because of the immorality of someone finding another and being sexually unfaithful to people.

So what do we do at Olive Baptist Church when people are living in less than the ideal? Number one. We forgive and receive. We do. We try to rebuild, number two.

That's why we have a thing called Divorce Recovery, of helping people recover. Thirdly, we try to help people restart, to get going again.

Thirty years ago the biggest question a pastor would have is would he do a wedding for someone who's been divorced. That's no longer the big question. The big question now is would you do a wedding for couples that are living together because that is a great number of especially young people today that live together without marriage and they will say, "A piece of paper doesn't mean anything." Well yeah it does. It means you come together before God and His church. You come before the state. You come before something of organization and you say, "We want to create this family and begin with God's blessing upon us."

So what do we do with that? We try to lead people if you're going to be together – and often they have children, not married – we want to lead them to the altar of getting married. We're not here to be a mean bunch. We're not here to be Pharisaical. We're not here to draw lines that nobody can get to. We're simply trying to help people get to the principal truth of scripture. In that we have to forgive. We have to help people restart. We have to help people recover. That's why we have Divorce Recovery. There are misses in marriage. We just miss the mark. It doesn't work and we see it.

You see, in our culture today the divorce rate is down and people rejoice but the reason it's down is because people living together unmarried is up. So we deal with those issues. So that's the introduction to the sermon. The makeup, the miracle, the mandate, and the misses but there is a fifth thing that I want you to see today and it's what I really want to talk to you about in this together forever message. It is the must have of marriage.

What is it that marriage must have? Jesus says, "What therefore God has joined," there must be a joining. What is that? The must have. What joins us? Well love joins us. Love. It's the day of love. It's Valentine's Day. Everybody wears red today, alright? I wear red every day. It's the day of red roses. It's the day of little heart-shaped candy. It's the day of love. Friend, if you're going to stay married and get married and be married, then the must have is the biblical love that drew you together to begin with. It's not a physical attraction. I'm telling you, that won't see you through. It'll last you awhile but it won't see you through forever. It takes biblical love, of God joining together.

Well let's think about that love. That's the must have for a few moments today. Over in the book of the Song of Solomon, chapter 8, verses 6 and 7. Look at this. Here's what Solomon said:

*"Put me like a seal over your heart,  
Like a seal on your arm.  
For love is as strong as death,  
Jealousy is as severe as Sheol;  
Its flashes are flashes of fire,*

*The very flame of the Lord. [Look at that. Your love, strong as death.]  
Many waters cannot quench love [that's strong as death],  
Nor will rivers overflow it;  
If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love,  
It would be utterly despised."*

Waters can't quench it. Rivers can't overflow it. I'm telling you, this Bible love lasts forever. Over the storms, over the hurt, over the stupid things that he says. Over the stuff she does. It's stronger than death. That's Bible love. It stays the course. Amen? It's there forever and ever and ever. Now abide faith, hope, but the greatest of these is love. Why is that? Because love is the only thing that will last forever. Faith and hope won't last forever. When you get to heaven you don't need faith. You'll be face to face. You don't need hope. You'll see it but you'll still need love because you'll bow at the altar of Almighty God and love Him. Faith, hope, love abide these but the greatest of these is this love that lasts forever.

Secondly, over in the book of Genesis, you remember when Jacob was getting ready to be married and he comes to Laban and he says, "I want your daughter," and he says, "You've got to work seven years." Now I'm telling you, this would cut down lots of marriages today. So he worked seven years and then he didn't get her. He wanted Rachel but he got Leah. One preacher said, "Because Leah is described in the Old Testament." One preacher said, "She was a Mesopotamian Schnauzer with pinkeye." She was not attractive and she had weak eyes according to the scriptures. He said, "I didn't sign up for this." He said, "Well you can have the other one for seven years more." Oh my Lord. Genesis 29:20 says: So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. That's Bible love. That's steadfastness. When it's tough it just seems like a few days when you're walking – why? Because of the depth of Bible love, of God's kind of love. It's not this what you see, it's not feelings. Good Lord, love's not feeling. You don't fall in love. You fall in a mud hole. Love is a choice. You choose. I'm with you through thick and thin. It's stronger than death. Waters and floods can't overcome it and it has a steadfastness. It just seems like a few days.

You remember when Boaz and Ruth got together? Oh my. Over in Ruth 4:21-22 you find that explanation of how they loved one another. You go read that. You'll find it over in that text. It's marvelous. It's my mother's favorite book in all the word of God when she talks about Ruth. Liz got her a statue of Ruth the last time we were in Israel. Then she found a picture up in Nashville the other day, a painting and she gave it to her. Solomon was born to Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

Do you notice that out of that marriage of Boaz and Ruth came King David? You know who came through the King David's lineage, don't you? The one who died for you and died for me. It was out of that deep love of Boaz being the kinsman-redeemer that – hey, let me tell you, you never know, you never know when you form a marriage, when you form a home and God then gives children and children's children and

children's children's children, you never know what's coming through your life. Why, that little grandbaby in the crib at your house may be the one that holds the cure to cancer in their hands. They may be the next elected official of XYZ. They may be the inventor of this. You never know what greatness can be found. That's why you ought to keep that family together.

Yesterday – I do a lot of things with my kids and then old Brad, he's my son-in-law and I try once a year for us to do a little something together. He's a Florida grad and so I got tickets and we went down to watch Alabama and Florida yesterday play basketball. We spent the whole day down there. He showed me where he went to school and what building's he was in. He walked me all over Gainesville and bought my lunch. We just had a great time. You never know what's coming out of your daughter marrying that boy and their children and their children's children. You just don't know. That's why you always ought to give them a faithful legacy so they look back.

On the way back, Brad and I talked last night. I told him all about my granddaddy. He never met my granddaddy. I just talked about granddaddy Traylor and Grandmother Bowman and talked about that and talked about then their grandparents that my daddy's told me about. Then Brad began to tell me about his grandparents in Santa Rosa County. The legacy just growing. Friend, you never know and that's why you need to stay faithful. He's not in this service and I'll say this. Big old tears welled up in my eyes. I was glad it was dark in the car last night. He mentioned one of our young men in this church and what a great couple they were. They're dear friends to Brad and Rachel. He said, "You know, next to me he's got the greatest wife in all the world." Now I know sucking up when I hear it but it was still a pretty good word, I'll tell you right now. You see, the must have, friend, is love. You better get in that thing for love and you better get in it with a Bible love.

I tell people all the time that come to my office getting ready to get married, I say, "If you're getting in this for what you can get out of it, you better get out of it right now." You don't get in marriage for what you can get out of it. You get in marriage for what you can put in it. If you will give you will receive but if you go in thinking that person's going to meet all your needs, O God, help you. It doesn't work that way. You see, when you get together, you get together to live together, to work together, to toil together, to dream together, to pray together, to serve together, to die together. It's the must have. We're in this til the end. Hallelujah.

Sweet Liz and I had been married not long. I was pastoring a little church and then we sensed a call to go to Southwestern Seminary. We went out there. I started to school and then we went up to the First Baptist Church of Henrietta, Texas. We were there for a little while and she walked in one day and she asked me this question. She said, "Ted, I want to ask you something." I said, "What is it?" She said, "Why don't you love me anymore?" I'm here to tell you, my life flashed before my eyes. You see, friend, you can be the president of the First National Bank and your wife leave you but I'm telling you, you come to Olive Baptist Church, you're not going to last long as the

pastor if your wife leaves you. We were in this together and I thought, Lord, she's walking out the door.

I'll never forget it when she asked me the question. I went right like this. I said, "Time out." I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "Well, you don't say it and write it and express it." I said, "Well, my momma and daddy have been married for 40-something years and I ain't never heard him say it." All he does is go to work. He never told me he loved me until I was 50 years old. I never doubted he did. I never realized it was important for her to hear it. I didn't need to hear it so why did she need to hear it? I said, "Can we just work on this a little? I'll do better if I just" – and so we found a book. We give it to every couple now that sends us a wedding invitation. We've been doing it for years and years. Willard Harley wrote *His Needs, Her Needs*. We read that book and I said, "Lord, God, she's got needs." And in the introduction to that book, Willard Harley says this. Listen to this little phrase. Harley says, "Needs keep score with relentless precision." Hear this again. Needs keep score with relentless precision.

You see, my wife's got some needs and those needs keep score with relentless precision. I didn't even know what her needs were. I'd never read the book. I didn't know. My wife needs me, when I walk in the room, to acknowledge she's there and for me to go by and touch her, stroke her hair, give her a hug. If everybody's in a jovial mood, maybe whack her on the fanny. It says you are here and I see you and I know you. She needs that. She needs me to talk. She needs me to speak to her and say, "I love you." She needs me to draw stupid hearts on the road. She does. When I read that, I thought, that's the dumbest thing I ever heard. I said, "Andy Andrews said to do it so I'm going to try it." I drew that thing on there. That's good. There wasn't nobody else that did that unless you got Andy's email. Everybody got a card but my wife got a drawing on the concrete. All it says is I'm thinking about you.

I've got needs too. My wife knew about my needs. You see, I will get home today after I preach here and I'm about done and then I'll preach again. I'll walk in the house and I'm telling you, it is very few times in 40 years when I've walked in after church that she's not said, "That was a masterful message today." Now, hey, I know lying when I hear it. Okay? But she's affirming this preacher. You see, I need time alone. I do folks all the time. I need my cave time. She'll give me my time to myself. She needs alone time because of her personality.

In Harley's book, if you're married you ought to read this book and you ought to give it to your kids. There are five needs of a man and five needs – and these are generalizations and sometimes they cross over but the greatest thing he says in this book that the first need of a woman is affection and the first need of a man is sexual fulfillment and what you have to understand is that affection and sexual fulfillment are not the same thing. Amen. They just simply are not.

He walks through those five generalizations for a man, five generalizations for a woman. I'm telling you, guys, if you'll write down those five things and work on them for 30 days, I'm telling you, it'll land a new spark in your marriage. I don't care if you've

been married for 30 days or 30 years. Ladies, if you'll land those five things – they're generalizations. Some of them cross over but I'm telling you, he hits the mark pretty close. If you'll read that book and see – Harley boils it all down and he'll just tell you, you must love one another.

Now I want you to hear your pastor this morning. This must have, this must have for marriage is that you must love God with all your heart and then you must love God with all your soul. You must love God and love each other. The greatest thing, guys, you can do for her is for her to say one day, "He loves God more than he loves me." Yes, sir. Because when you love God the way you ought to love God, you will have such an encouraging attention to your spouse. It'll change you forever.

We walked through a crisis and I said, "Honey, if you'll give me a little time, we'll work this out." Fast forward. We're in Dallas, Texas pastoring a church. You're talking to me about coming here. My wife's going through major depression. I won't share anything today she's not taught here to you. She's taught all over everywhere about this walking through the depression. I've never walked through depression. I've been depressed but never walked clinically like she has.

She went to see the counselor. The counselor called me and she said, "I want you to come see me." I said, "I ain't sick. I ain't coming to see you." She said, "No, I need to talk to you." I said, "Alright." I said, "But I will not come in the front door. How do I get to your office through wherever the garbage comes out?" I said, "I ain't going in there and people see me going in no counseling office. I'm just telling you, I ain't walking in there." No pride in me at all. She let me come up the back flight of steps going into her office. She sat me down and she said, "Your wife is doing everything in the church. She's leading the choir, she's singing, she's doing preschool. She's leading all that stuff and I want to know why are you telling her to do that?" I laughed out loud. I said, "You're dumber than a sack of rocks." I said, "You think I can make my wife do that stuff?" I said, "Do you think I'd try to make my wife do all that?" She said, "Well she is doing it and she's doing it to be pleasing." I said, "I don't know who she's trying to please. It may be me but it's not because I told her."

Liz had self-imposed a lot of that stuff on herself. It wasn't because I made her do it. We had to walk through that and I had to love my wife through that hurt. So my wife now has her mantra. You ask her to do anything in this church you want to ask her to do and she says, "I will do it if the Lord God tells me to and if God doesn't tell me to I ain't signing up." You've noticed she's not been in the choir for about a year. Many of you have asked me about it. She just absolutely does not like Jon. That's the issue. No, God put a new calling in her life. She's down there right now teaching in that 9:30 department. Those 2-year-olds. I'll get home today and she'll be so frazzled. She'll say, "We had 19 2-year-olds." The biggest stressor in her life is trying to find workers to help her in that class. She works on that and works on that and she just cannot get there on Wednesday night and get back in the choir. She'll get in here late for the second service. That's the call of God in her life right now. The day'll come she'll be back in choir. She's told me that. She's told Jon that. The day will come when God will

release her to do it again but right now – man, that’s a great mantra to have. I’ll do anything that you want me to do if God tells me to do it. It just absolutely gave her liberty and freedom. Amen.

She told somebody this week, she said, “Now the pastor doesn’t deal with that depression and burnout like I do because he learned a long time ago to lay it down.” I’m not perfect but I did learn that because Tony Evans told me one time – a great black preacher in Texas – Tony Evans said, “Preacher, let me tell you something, if Jesus dying for the church can’t take care of it, you dying for it ain’t going to help it at all.” I said, “Amen.” He said, “You’re in this for the long haul.” He said, “Don’t kill yourself in your 40<sup>th</sup> year. Make sure you can go into your 80<sup>th</sup> if God wants you to.” He said, “Work hard and do all you want to but there’s a time not just to work. The Bible says there’s also a Sabbath day’s rest.” So I’ve tried to learn to lay some of that down. With that my wife and I are able to talk about that and that’s how we made it to year 40. That’s how we’re going to make it to year 50. That’s how we’re going to make it to year 60 if God gives it to us because we love God and love one another.

I want all ya’ll to know, I love my wife more than I love you and I’m going to do that. Amen. I hope the same can be said about you that you love your spouse more than you love Olive Baptist Church. Amen. Because if you do that, together you’ll be right where you need to be in the service of God in this church and we’ll do everything God wants us to do.

Well, Dr. Davis, I’ve really struggled with how to have the invitation today. Steve Davis and Dianna, my sweet, dear friends over here and Vice-President of the North American Mission Board. They’ve been such encouragers to us. We love them. I’ve thought about asking you if you want to make a recommitment of your vows to the Lord today if you’re with your spouse. Then I thought, well, I put myself out there and I said, “Now if I’m sitting out there and that preacher asked me to do that, I’d just feel stupid if I didn’t do it so I’d do it even if I didn’t want to.” So I’m not going to do that. Then I thought about, well, maybe we ought to just have everyone pray that’s got their spouse and I thought, well, you know, if I’m sitting out here and I’m single or my wife’s working down with the second graders or 2-year-olds and I’m by myself, I can’t pray with nobody.

So I prayed and I just thought, well, here’s the way we ought to do it today. You ought to love God even more than you love your spouse so let’s forget about the spouse and let’s make sure we’re all loving God like we’re supposed to today because if you get this right, you’ll get this right. So the invitation is this. If you’re here and not saved, come get saved today. What a great day to get saved. Valentine’s Day. Wouldn’t that be great if you’re sitting there with your spouse and they’re lost and they got saved today? Man, what a wonderful Valentine’s gift that would be. So maybe you’re here and you’ve never trusted – you should come. Maybe you’re like this gentleman that was baptized today. You say, “That’s where I need to start, preacher. Right there. I need to make my declaration that He’s my Lord.” Then you come and be a part.

Maybe you do just need to reach over and take the hand of your sweetheart and say, "You know, it's been 25 years since we've been to the altar, sweetheart. Let's just go down there and kneel at the altar today." Maybe that man ought to lead that way. That'd be a great thing. "Let's just go down and make it right with God today. Not that we've got a big sin. Let's just have a fresh commitment. We don't need the preacher to do that." Maybe that's the call of God in your life but I know this. There's somebody standing in this service today that you are in the far country away from God and the Lord's calling you to come home, to come home, to come home.

You see, some of you have been joined to God and you've gotten away from that relationship. What God put together, don't let any man ever separate you from a relationship with the Lord. You need to come home to Him today up in that balcony and around, on this ground floor. God's calling in your heart. You need to come today. When we sing these two stanzas of this invitation, then I want you to step out and come. Take me by the hand and say, "Pastor, today's my day." Membership. Lordship. Confession. You come, you come, you come.