
MAN WOMAN WILD HARD HEARTS

DAY 1

In Matthew 9:1-3 the Pharisees try to trap Jesus and force him to take sides with or against the Hebrew laws on divorce. Even today, we tend to approach this passage with scrutiny of divorce. Jesus turned the focus away from the judgments and rules of *when it is permissible to divorce* to the *commitment to marriage and the marital relationship*. Instead of debating the law regarding divorce, Jesus points us to the original intent of the marriage relationship: a commitment to *survive* together. When we build our marriages out of the building blocks of commitment and walk together as God intended, we create good marriages from which good naturally flows. God intended for the two to be committed to being one. "Happiness and self-fulfillment are not the purpose of marriage: Survival is the purpose." That tag line probably won't sell too many albums! Does this concept make you uncomfortable? Isn't marriage about finding your one true love and living happily ever after?

READ MATTHEW 19:4-6. What does this passage say about the marriage relationship? God's purpose for marriage is for the two to become one... to stand together... to survive together. Happiness is a consequence of getting this marriage deal right. How might understanding this concept change your view of the marriage relationship? If you're single, how might understanding this concept change the way you consider dating and potential mates? Would it change the qualities and characteristics you look for in a future spouse? How does it affect your expectations of marriage and/or your spouse? Could it change the current lens through which you see your spouse?

SEARCH your heart. **PRAY** that God would open your eyes to see any misconceptions you may have with regards to the purpose and function of the marital union. **ASK HIM** to clear away any ideals, thoughts, perceptions or beliefs you may have that are not what He intends.

DAY 2

Jesus defines marriage as a commitment to live life together. Not to stick together until you're no longer happy or feel unfulfilled and look for something better. But to **SURVIVE** together. Marriage is a continual choice. What threatens that choice?

READ MATTHEW 19:1-9. Instead of permitting and proving on what grounds divorce is justified, Jesus calls us to unhardened hearts, free of contempt. When you allow your heart to become hard you will be led to unfaithfulness... unfaithfulness to God, to your faith, and your spouse. **READ EZEKIEL 3:7.**

CONSIDER: Have I allowed my heart to become hardened? Have I become unwilling to hear from God?

READ MATTHEW 13:14-15. No matter where we are on our journey, whether we're single, married, divorced, or re-married, we all need of some type of healing from our God. What's described as the resisting factor to the people

receiving that healing? As long as we allow our hearts to remain calloused and hardened, we're unable to hear from God, to see His way, and to be the husband/wife/friend/employer/parent/person God created us to be. **READ** through this last passage again. Does this describe your heart? "Will it be said of me... because your heart had become hardened...?"

CLOSE TODAY'S TIME BY READING MATTHEW 13:16.

"But blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear." **PRAY** for eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart that is free of contempt.

DAYS 3 AND 4

Take the next couple of days to **EVALUATE** the condition of your heart and the path you're on. **REVIEW** "The Path to a Hard Heart (Divorce)" and "The Path to Betrayal (adultery)" from this weekend's outline. Take a notebook and **WRITE** what comes to mind and as you consider these questions:

Have you left the past unresolved? Are you collecting offenses, telling yourself and others a story about your spouse? Are you looking for justification from others and rationalizing? Are you already certain your situation is different? The exception? The Path to Betrayal (adultery) parallels the Path to a Hard Heart (divorce) but takes a twist at the justification and rationalization.

While on The Path to a Hard Heart (divorce), you discover someone who "understands" you and your situation -- an ally. This "friend" then joins you on The Path to a Hard Heart (divorce), comforting, consoling and becoming the person your spouse is not. You toy with the possibilities of being with this other person and begin to rationalize. "It doesn't hurt to simply think about it." You begin to share thoughts and disappointments about your situation. Next comes the attraction which becomes action. You text, you talk, you meet this ally... You didn't plan to be unfaithful...

DAY 5

LOOK UP the lyrics to Unfaithful -- a song recorded by Rhianna. This song gives us a picture of the sorrow, brokenness, and pain which lead to the path of a hard heart and betrayal. Where's your heart today? **OPEN** your eyes and ears to see the path that you're currently on. **LOOK** back at the purpose for marriage described in Day 1. What have you discovered about the condition of your heart? Jesus, in His infinite wisdom, calls you to stop searching for reasons and justifications to keep your heart hard but rather, to **ROOT OUT THE CAUSE** -- the contempt within your heart.

John M. Gottman, Ph.D has proven something remarkable. He can predict with 95% accuracy whether a couple will still be married fifteen years later by listening to them talk for an hour. He can find much of what he needs to know by focusing on what **The Four Horsemen: defensiveness, stonewalling, criticism, and contempt**. Within The Four Horsemen, there is one he considers the most important of all: **contempt**. If Gottman observes one or both marriage partners showing contempt toward the other, he considers it the single most important sign that the marriage is in trouble. (*excerpt from article at <http://www.enotalone.com/article/3938.html>*)

PRAY that God would do whatever it takes to eliminate the contempt in our hearts. Pray for the protection our hearts, our marriages and our homes. Ask for God's strength to forge a better path -- a path on which the purpose isn't happiness but will result in happiness and blessings. Then we'll truly become good people from whom good things naturally flow.

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