

## ***What Does Matthew 19:9 Mean?***

***With Guests Jordan and Priscilla Gray***

**WES:** Welcome to the Radically Christian Bible Study podcast. I'm your host, Wes McAdams. Here we have one goal: Learn to love like Jesus. We've been doing a series entitled, "What does this passage mean?" and we've been talking about various passages of scripture and sort of walking through what do we observe in the text? What do we observe in the context? How do we interpret this passage in light of the context? What did it mean to its original audience? And then, finally, and sometimes most importantly, how does this apply to our lives today?

I got an e-mail from a listener regarding Matthew 19:9 that talks about marriage and divorce and remarriage, and I initially wrote back to the person who sent me the question, and I said, "Yeah, I don't really deal with marriage, divorce, and remarriage in my blog or my podcast." And I've been pretty intentional about not talking about this subject on the Radically Christian site for several years now, and I've done that on purpose because this subject has a lot of emotion attached to it, people's lives, people's families, people's souls attached to this subject, and there's a lot of different thoughts and interpretations of these texts. And I really feel like when people are struggling with these matters, they need to be in touch with and talking to leaders, ministers, elders, shepherds in their local churches, and I would continue to encourage people to do that.

But as I thought about Matthew 19 and the importance of this passage

in Jesus' teaching on marriage, I thought about someone that I know from Facebook, someone I look up to -- a couple that I look up to, Jordan and Priscilla Gray, and I invited them to be part of this conversation today because I believe their story and their insight into this truth can be helpful to all of us. So Jordan and Priscilla, thank you so very much for joining me today.

**PRISCILLA:** Thank you so much for having us.

**JORDAN:** Thank you, Wes. It's an honor to be here. Thank you.

**PRISCILLA:** Yes, absolutely.

**WES:** Well, we do obviously want to talk about and study Matthew 19 and talk about the text, but I think it would be helpful to sort of set the stage with your context, with your life, with your story, and why this is such a relevant subject for you-all.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah, absolutely. Do you want to get started?

**JORDAN:** Sure thing. So I guess it was towards the end of 2016, beginning of 2017, that we were ministering in a congregation with divorce/remarriage nowhere on our radar, really didn't even know that we had marriage trouble to the extent that we had it. But all of a sudden things exploded, and in January of 2017, Priscilla started going through an affair. A couple of months passed. We were really struggling to move forward, and then I also get into an affair, and so we're both just chaotic and our marriage was falling apart. And from about January to July that goes on until, finally, July, divorce is filed, and September of 2017 our divorce was final. So, really, very quickly, considering all things, we were dealing with divorce and thinking about what that meant for us, thinking about what that meant for the

future, and, of course, you know, remarriage may be part of that. That wasn't, you know, really in the picture at the time, thinking about remarriage, but, of course, that's really in the back of your mind. "Am I ever going to be remarried again?" "What's my life going to look like from here on out?" So that was a year of a lot of chaos and really coming to this text and thinking about this issue from a much more personal perspective than we had ever had to before.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah, yeah. So kind of, you know, what was going on with me is that, yes, like he said, we did not realize the extent of marriage problems that we had. We would say that we just had normal marriage problems. You know, we would have the typical nagging, you know, bickering a little bit, but we would just kind of sweep those things under the rug. We weren't always in ministry. He was an accountant before we were in ministry together, so he was always working. And then I was a stay-at-home mom and, you know, that was just kind of the dynamic of our family, and we just kind of had our roles and we stuck to our roles, and we had a lot of children so that kind of kept us busy and occupied throughout those years. And so we just kind of -- like I said, you know, as we would have issues, we didn't think that they were abnormal issues. We just thought normal marital issues, and they were, but we were not dealing with them; we were just kind of sweeping them under the rug.

So then when, like he said, we were in a church at some point that I did start to feel just really kind of lonely and empty and like I wasn't really fulfilling my purpose. I get it. I get it; a stay-at-home mom is a very hard job, a very, you know, important job, an important role, but I had grown up

just wanting to serve in the church in some way, and so I began trying to find what is my purpose in the church. And so, again, like I said, I was just kind of feeling lonely and overwhelmed with just, you know, being home all the time while Jordan was working all the time, and I did begin trying to get involved in having a singles ministry, and it actually started in our home. We started having a bunch of singles come into our home, and, actually, that ministry kind of took off. You know, people were coming and they were being just real and authentic, and it was -- some of the singles had not been to church in years.

**JORDAN:** It was an amazing thing. I mean, so many in church world know how hard it is to do singles ministry, and all of a sudden, God was just anointing something. It was on fire. But I think that really revealed -- speaking of fire, it revealed some things in us because it really pushed us to the boundaries. If we didn't have a healthy family life before, and all of a sudden we're sitting up till 2:00 in the morning with a bunch of singles multiple nights a week, that really -- it really pressed on the problems that were already there.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah, yeah. So there was one person in particular that we were really trying to encourage in this group, and that person I just got very, very close to and, you know, ended up having more feelings for this person than just Godly, Christlike feelings. And so, anyway, that did turn into a full-blown affair months into this ministry. And, of course, you know, like Jordan said, I did come to him, I did confess this to him. I thought his initial reaction would be, "You're out. There's no way" -- you know, "Using scripture, I can divorce you. I have the right to divorce you." And, actually,

that's not how he responded at all, and that kind of took me back because in the back of my mind I was somewhat hoping that that was his response. I was somewhat hoping that that's how he would handle that, but then he didn't, so that was kind of confusing. Like wait a second. "I had this idea that maybe you didn't really love me all these years because you've just been busy -- you know, work, ministry, etc. -- and now you're telling me, 'No, it's worth it for me to do something to try to save this marriage.'"

And so we did initially begin to try to work on things and work through this affair. You know, I know we don't want to deep-dive into affairs, but it's not that simple, and I do think that that is a great topic that people do need to explore, that affairs are not simply just that people fall in love and they want to be with someone else, and I do think that that's something that people need to learn about, because if your spouse is in the middle of an affair, there is still hope for your marriage even if they're saying, "I don't want this marriage. I want out." And, you know, maybe a shameless plug, but Marriage Helper is a very resourceful organization that can help with that. But anyway --

**JORDAN:** Absolutely.

**PRISCILLA:** -- so, yes, so we did begin to try, but that pull to be with that other person was so strong that it was just chaotic. Like he said, it was just back and forth. And because I couldn't stop, he's just like, "Well, there's no way you can love me if you can't stop this affair." And so then, like he said, he kind of ended up spiraling, as well, until we ultimately did divorce.

**JORDAN:** I would say that, you know, I understood a couple of things -- or at least thought I did, on the outset. I would say this, you know, for both of

us. I understood my rights. You know, Matthew 19 -- we're about to get into that text, and I understood -- or thought I understood where my rights were. I understood that Jesus calls us to mercy, and so my first response shouldn't be to fall back on my rights; it should be do what Jesus does, and so forgiveness. What I completely did not understand was the reality of walking with someone in addiction, which is exactly what an affair is. And so, yes, you know, if she tells me what's going on, I say, "Absolutely I want to forgive you and make this work." And then the days start to drag by and the weeks start to drag by, and the reality of forgiveness and actually walking the cross is a whole lot different than, "Oh, just forgive them and everything's better and they stop the bad thing and good things start happening again." It was a very naive idea of how it should go.

So I would just say that, you know, what I learned, really, just kind of first glance on this topic, is that when people get into marriage crisis, their rights really become large because of several different things: Pain. Just the pain of going through marriage crisis will push you to, "Okay. You know, what's my rights in this situation?" Fear. "What am I going to lose in this situation if they continue to go down this path? Do I need to be looking out for my finances, for my custody?" You know, "Do you know a good lawyer?" "Do I have a right to remarry?" Legal, legal, legal. The rights just get large. And self-righteousness. You know, "At the end of the day, you've done something that I didn't do," so, you know, all of that pushes you towards focusing on your rights when the biggest issue should be the cross of Jesus Christ, being called to be Jesus. What would Jesus do? Jesus would forgive, and he'd forgive to the extent of hanging on a Roman cross.

And the reality of what that meant, I did not know. It took months and months, and even years, of processing after the fact to see what does the cross of Jesus really say about working through this issue.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah, absolutely.

**WES:** Wow.

**PRISCILLA:** That's kind of our story.

**WES:** Well, thank you for sharing it with us. That vulnerability and that transparency I know is a blessing to me, but I know it's going to be a blessing to others who hear this that are in other situations that maybe mirror yours or maybe are very different, but they can -- it resonates with them. But I think especially thank you for living out the gospel and showing us what the gospel looks like, what a cruciform life looks like in the midst of real life and struggle and sin and how the cross of Jesus not only brings us salvation, but it can transform our relationships. So thank you for putting it in that light, because I think that as we get into the text -- I often talk about a cruciform hermeneutic, a way of reading the Bible through the cross of Jesus, and I think that you just explained marriage with a cruciform lens, and I think that that's exactly right, and I think that that couches our interpretation of Matthew 19, and every passage in the Bible, in the right light.

So I'm just going to read the text right now, and then we'll kind of talk about what do you-all see there that we should observe or point out or notice as we look at that. So I'm going to read Matthew 19, starting in verse 3. It says, "The Pharisees came up to Jesus and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' And he answered, 'Have you not read

that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.' They said to him, 'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?' And he said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.' The disciples said to him, 'If such is the case of a man with his wife, it's better not to marry.' But he said to them, 'Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been made so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this, receive it.'"

Okay. So I read a little bit more, obviously, than Matthew 19:9, where we tend to focus all of our attention, but for both of you-all, Jordan and Priscilla, what do you think as we read this passage? If we're going to understand it rightly and then live it out when it matters most, what should we notice about the words of Jesus here, do you think?

**JORDAN:** Yeah. I would say my experience with this text has been that there's both more and less here than we have often made it to be. My -- the way that I preached Matthew 19 early days versus the way I preach it now -- now I preach it both more hardly and more liberally, if I can use that word.

**PRISCILLA:** Gracefully.

**JORDAN:** Gracefully, yes. So I guess, just starting on the more hard edges of this, this is -- Jesus is serious about divorce. I mean, divorce is a terrible, terrible thing, and if you've ever been through a divorce, you know exactly what I'm talking about. This is not speaking judgment; this is just speaking the reality of what divorce is, and he takes us all the way back to the beginning, all the way back to Genesis 2. So he's not appealing to any cultural standards; he's appealing to what marriage is.

And I think we can set that alongside -- you know, you said use a cruciform lens, use a Jesus lens to interpret. Well, the lens of God's created order, Genesis 1 and 2, that's -- it's really one and the same. Jesus is God's ideal. Genesis 1 and 2, that's God's ideal. So what is that? Marriage is the creation of one flesh. One flesh. I think about our marriage, looking back through the years before our divorce. You can't separate -- we had 10, 11, 12, 13 years of marriage. You can't separate that stuff. You really become one in so many ways that we weren't really even aware of until we started trying to separate it. But Malachi says, "Whoever does not love his wife but divorces her covers his garment with violence," so the image being, if you can imagine, putting a single body on an operating table and picking up your scalpels and your bone saws and going about the operation of splitting up that body. Violence, blood, gore, this is what divorce is, the tearing apart of one flesh. And so it's just -- it's not God's will. It's not life, and I would strongly ask anybody who's considering it at all -- even if you say, "Well, they committed adultery." Okay. This is still violence. What would Jesus do? Jesus would pursue life and healing and reconciliation. He would not just set to the task of violence. So I would dwell there and really press that.

But on the other hand, I think that this text has been used to push back against divorce in a legalistic sense, as well. You know, someone does divorce, and we meet up with them 20 years later and they've been raising kids and in a house for, you know, 15 years of a second marriage, but we use this text to say, "Well, I'm so sorry, but you didn't do it right. You've got to get a divorce now." And why? Well, you know, there's some little nit-picky aspects of the text that we can walk through, but I think this text has been used to scare people away from divorce by binding things that aren't actually bound in this text. So I think this text both would tell people, look, divorce is violence. It's one flesh that you're tearing apart. Don't do that. But on the other hand, we need to be careful that we say only what this text says and not bind more than what it actually binds.

**PRISCILLA:** Absolutely. So when I come to this text, you know, I think that growing up I just thought of God's rules and God's laws as, oh, we're just supposed to do this. We may not understand why or, you know, we -- sorry, I lost my train of thought. Anyway, but, yeah, so we kind of come to this text thinking, okay, this is just a rule -- another rule that we have to follow, another rule that God has made for us. But, really, you know, just kind of looking at the scripture, or all of scripture, in the context of the cross, in the context of Jesus, then we do come to this understanding that whatever he has said, it's for our good. It's not because it's just another rule or another law.

And so, like he said, I'm even much -- and I say that because I guess, since I'm the former wayward spouse, the former person who wanted out of the relationship, I know that that sounds ridiculous that I would be even

more anti-divorce, but I am. I've become a lot more anti-divorce because I have seen the trauma that it causes not just to me, but to my husband and to my children and to people even beyond that. And so it is just something that, like he said, is violence against that one flesh.

The other thing is that divorce itself is so sinful. There's so much division and selfish ambition and, you know, there's just all kinds of things going on within those interactions that are so sinful. So it's not even that, oh, yeah, the thing that happened was sinful and I'm going to get divorced and I'm going to be able to move forward and it's going to be great. The act itself is sinful, I believe. And even, you know, just talking about taking our business before a secular court to say, "Okay, we, as believers, cannot, you know, settle this with each other. We have to take this before a secular court." Even that, I believe, is part of the sinfulness.

**JORDAN:** So there was a moment -- you know, by the way, we had five kids when we started going through divorce, so splitting up a household with five kids, it was really rough. There was this moment I remember when she was packing up to move out and boxing things up and, you know, boxing a lot of children's clothing up -- because there was five of them, there was a lot of that -- boxing things from the kitchen up. You never think through these things before you actually get into them, but I remember she was taking some things out of the kitchen that I thought, you know, she was taking more than she should, taking more children's clothing than I thought that she should. Who's to say? But I was going from box to box taking pictures inside of the boxes to be able to show, I don't know, a judge, a lawyer, or whatever, and it was just -- looking back on that, it was so insane how my

mind went there, that I'm going to go, as she said, before some secular court with my little iPhone pictures and say, "Hey, she needs to give me three pairs of jeans back," or whatever. It just is so opposite of the cross.

**PRISCILLA:** Absolutely. But he's a lot harder on himself. I was actually, I mean, absolutely acting ridiculously so, you know, he, of course, would be in a panic or in a place of fear, so, you know, he's a lot harder on himself than he should be. But anyway, so just kind of going back to that text, it is just that, you know, like Jordan was saying even about reconciliation, that's what Jesus would have us pursue. I truly believe that that's the whole reason Jesus came to this earth. Reconciliation was the ultimate purpose that Jesus came to this earth for, so why wouldn't we pursue that in our relationships, especially our marriage relationships that are supposed to be the picture of Christ and his church?

**WES:** Amen.

**JORDAN:** So I'm just looking at this, just a couple more little textual issues. I guess we need to kind of walk through a couple of these points. There's the one flesh, Genesis 2. What does that say? We really covered that. I think we also need to pay attention to verse 3, the question that Jesus is even responding to in the first place. "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" I think it's really important to understand that that is a context for what comes after. And when we hear them say "Is it lawful," well, that's not just saying, "Is it right," "Is it righteous?" "Is it in accordance with the law of Moses?" So we need to go back and look, where is this question even coming from?

And I was really shocked when I started looking for the context in the

Old Testament. I would have thought that, you know, certificates of divorce and the process for getting a divorce, whatnot, would be pretty spelled out in the old law. It really just boils down to one verse, one passage, and there's not really even much there. Deuteronomy 24, that's really the only place that you can go in the old law to look for certificates of divorce, and even there, like I said, it's really almost in passing. It's a law about something niche about certificates of divorce that really just kind of assumes certificates of divorce. Deuteronomy 24:1 says that, "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house and she departs out of his house." You can see here in this text it's almost just assuming you already know about certificates of divorce, which you look at the law of Moses and you don't already know about certificates of divorce from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus. They're not talked about in detail as we would hope they would be. But you take this one passage and you go into the religious climate of Jesus' day, and they were debating about this one verse here because, obviously, you can give a certificate of divorce if you find some indecency in your partner -- in a Jewish context, your wife. It wasn't really something that a woman could do, divorcing her husband, but if the husband found an indecency in his wife, he could hand her a certificate of divorce.

And you had liberal opinions and you had conservative opinions about this. The conservative opinion by the House of Shammai was that, "We need to really be restrictive about the way we read this. This indecency certainly only refers to adultery, or porneia, fornication, some kind of

adulterous type of indecency." The liberal position, the House of Hillel, said, "No, it's really anything that you deem to be an indecency." The example is even given if she burns your meal, then that can be some indecency over which you hand her a certificate of divorce. Rabbi Akiva later on would say, "If you see another woman that you find more pleasing than your wife, then you can give her a certificate of divorce." He was ahead of his time. So you have these debates and these schools of thought about this one verse.

And so they bring this to Jesus and they say, "Jesus, look, is it lawful -- in accordance with Deuteronomy 24, is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? What do you think, Jesus? Any cause like Hillel says? Indecency, is it more restrictive like Shammai says?" This question has a context, and what Jesus basically says is, "Let's go back to the created order." In so many words, he sides with the House of Shammai, that, yes, if there has been adultery committed, then that is an indecency that may warrant a certificate of divorce. And so he's answering a particular question in a particular law-of-Moses context, and, I believe, even with a specific emphasis on protecting women who were being mistreated by, he said, hard hearts. "Moses had to give you this commandment because of the hardness of your hearts. You're just throwing your wives away like property." It was really about protecting them. So there's that context that really matters. It really matters.

Verse 7, they kind of go back to it when he tells them, "Hey, don't get divorced. What God has joined together, let no man separate." That's the ideal. That's the created order. They go back to it: "So why then did Moses

command one to give a certificate of divorce?" And it's really important here -- if you ever want to win a debate in a cheap way, you need to control the vocabulary. They're doing that here. Moses didn't "command" a divorce certificate, and Jesus points that out. "Because of the hardness of your heart, Moses allowed you to divorce. Didn't command you to divorce; he permitted it." So this answer that he gives in Matthew 19:9, by the time we get to that verse, we're deep in the context of a law straight out of Deuteronomy 24.

**WES:** Yeah. Well, I appreciate all that context. I think that that's incredibly helpful. And I especially appreciate the way that you-all have both couched this conversation in ways of saying that this is for people's good. These laws aren't given so that God can control us in ways that are harsh and unreasonable and for no reason, arbitrary. God gives us these laws, these rules, these guidelines for our flourishing, for our benefit. And, Jordan, you even pointed out about the protection of women, both in the day of Moses and in the day of Jesus. And it's interesting to me, you've both sort of brought up even the way that so many times Matthew 19 gets interpreted and applied in a legalistic type of a way, that that leads to the further oppression of women, the further detriment of women, and not just women, but whole households, and, as you said before, children.

When we read this text in a legalistic way, it leads to more harm and less health and flourishing, which is ironic because Jesus was attempting to deal with -- Jesus was dealing with the legalism of his day that was reading this text of Deuteronomy 24 in such a way that these teachers of the law, these Pharisees, were apparently patting themselves on the back for,

quote-unquote, keeping the law, when they were really just trading their wife in for another. And Jesus, to your point, says, "You're not keeping the law. You're doing what was allowed for, but this was never the will of God." Jesus even only gets to the point of making the -- what we call the exception for sexual immorality when they pressed him on the point. Originally, he just says, "This was never the will of God. It was always for one man and one woman to be joined together for life."

And, wow, it just -- it's so -- the will of God is so beautiful, but then we do have very real things that come up. And if you would, maybe speak to -- because I know a lot of people -- the words that sort of stick out and I think are the reason -- is the reason the disciples of Jesus reacted so strongly -- you began this conversation by talking about the hard edges of this teaching, because it does have hard edges to it, and the disciples even react with shock, saying, "Hey, if this is the way it is, it would be better not to get married at all." But I think the part that is so shocking is when Jesus says that, "Whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery." So, again, we could talk about the ways that that idea is misused, but for you-all, especially reading it through the lens that you've had, what do you think about what Jesus says there and why he puts it in such stark terms to say, "If you divorce your spouse and go marry another one, you're committing adultery"? Why would Jesus, in your estimation, say things like that?

**JORDAN:** Yeah. I mean, I've heard it put this way before, that you can't sleep with Donna if you're married to Denise, and it doesn't make it any better if you get a divorce with Denise to sleep with Donna. It's still the

same thing. And I think Jesus is -- you know, Matthew 5:20, when he's in the Sermon on the Mount, he says, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, you won't enter the kingdom of heaven," and the point there is that these guys, like you said, were patting themselves on the back thinking they were doing the big thing by just being so in tune with the letter of the law, and Jesus is saying they're actually taking the easy road. Like they are -- instead of having their heart affected, they would rather, you know, tick off all the boxes of the letter of the law. But I think what he's pointing out here is like, "You guys that are checking this box, you got your certificate of divorce, you think you're good according to the law. It's just you are maintaining a hardness of heart. You are trying to carve out a kind of religion where you don't have to follow Jesus." And I know the Pharisees weren't concerned with following Jesus, but "you're trying to have your cake and eat it, too. You're trying to have a hard heart but then be God-like, and it does not work," and so I think Jesus is really just pressing it into plain view. It's adultery. It's adultery.

And I think there's two things here that really get mixed up, and so I appreciate you kind of separating the conversation. There is the conversation about what is sinful and what is righteous, and then there's the conversation about what do we do after the fact, if somebody has had a divorce and they are wanting to get remarried, and we're trying to saddle them with, no, you can never marry again or what have you. Those are really two separate conversations. But the one I think Jesus has his eyes on right here is the "Do not get divorced."

**PRISCILLA:** So kind of where I come at this piece is more from like the

research that's out there. I think that a lot of times we think, "Okay, I didn't get it right the first time. I'm going to be able to get it right the second time." But research just does not speak to that. The research out there shows that we most often get it right, or rightest, or however you want to say that, the first time. Because the divorce rate, which now, of course, it's gotten lower because the marriage rate is also decreasing -- but the divorce rate for first marriages right now is around 41 to 44 percent, but then when you get into second marriages, the divorce rate jumps to 61 percent. And then when you get into third marriages, it increases to in the 70s -- in the high 70s percent of divorce rate -- or of divorce. And so it's just -- like I think it's, again, more from the research standpoint -- I'm not necessarily trying to interpret that passage -- but we're not going to get it righter the more that we do it. We're actually going to get it more wrong the more that we do it, especially if we're not addressing the problem. And, you know, I personally believe that problems in a marriage are problems with the individuals, and you've got to address the problems within you in order to move forward in a healthier way, and, again, I don't think you're going to get it righter with another person.

**JORDAN:** Absolutely.

**PRISCILLA:** I think that -- and even one of the passages that comes to mind so often because, wow, I am so incredibly grateful that God brought us back together and he allowed us to reconcile within our marriage. It is talking about the enjoying the wife of your youth. I'm not -- I don't have it memorized, but I think that there's something really deep to that. There is a deeper level of enjoyment when you're with the spouse of your youth. And

so, like I said, that's just kind of where I come down in that part is that you're not going to get it righter next time.

**JORDAN:** And I think that is so good to really -- that's the ideal, right?

The wife of your youth. At the same time, I wouldn't want anybody to listen to this who is in a second or third marriage and think, "Well, man, you know, there's no hope for me," or, "I've already messed up too bad." We're not saying that there is -- God always can work redemptively right now --

**PRISCILLA:** Absolutely.

**JORDAN:** -- right where you are and bring healing right where you are. I think the point, though, is that unless you open up your heart and let him do a heart work in you, you're going to carry the same brokenness from relationship to relationship. You know, that's -- it's practical, I think it's in this text, that if you resist his work on your heart, call it adultery, call it brokenness that carries on throughout your whole life, it's really one and the same.

**PRISCILLA:** That's right.

**WES:** I hope I'm not throwing a -- sorry, go ahead. I was about to throw you a curveball, so you go ahead.

**JORDAN:** I was about to see if you wanted to go on to the remarriage part of it, but let's handle the curveball.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah, let's do the curveball.

**WES:** You know, as we think about the application -- and you guys have done a fantastic job of helping to apply these principles to all of us. I think all of our marriages, no matter whether they're super healthy, as healthy as they can get, or they are falling apart, you know, I think that there's

application to everything that's been said. But one of the things that has come to my mind just as you-all have spoken -- and you even mentioned self-righteousness. And as I look at the text, that's exactly what Jesus -- so often, as he dealt with the Pharisees, what he's dealing with is self-righteousness. And I can't help but think about some of the things that you-all have said and the things that I've seen as I've counseled couples. But we almost always -- it seems like we almost always feel justified in our decisions. Priscilla, you said that a lot of what you were feeling and experiencing and the reasons you did what you did was you felt alone and you felt neglected and unloved, and so you -- it sounds like you felt justified in your decisions. And, of course, Jordan, when you were presented with what was going on, you felt justified in your decisions, and I think that the Pharisees feel justified in their position. So speak to that, if you would, of how self-righteousness is an enemy to experiencing and having what God would have us to experience in life and in marriage.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah. So, of course, the passage that comes to mind is, "God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble."

**JORDAN:** That's terrifying.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah. So I think -- we talk about this quite often, that pride is the root of all other sin, and, you know, I think a lot of times we want to address -- oh, let's say you're having an affair or you're dealing with a struggle with alcohol or you have a porn addiction, and we want to address those behaviors, but we're still not addressing the root problems within ourselves. Even if the person -- you know, I'm wanting to help you with your alcohol addiction or your drug addiction or porn addiction, you know, like, I

need to look at myself. And I think it also goes along with Matthew 7, and I'm very quick to point out specks in other's eyes but I am not quick to address the log in my own eye. So I think that kind of plays a part in a lot of those types of interactions and, like you said, just kind of that self-righteousness. As long as I'm not doing those bad behaviors that I see in another person, I'm okay, and I'm not addressing that deeper problem. But I think self-righteousness leads to a lot of other problems if we leave it unchecked.

**JORDAN:** Yeah. So when we started going through our mess, as I said, it started, you know, she was in an affair. A couple months go past and I really started to unravel, slow at first, but in many, many different ways. Drinking alcoholically at times, a terrible porn addiction, reaching out to another woman and starting an affair myself. These things -- really, my life, morally, began to unravel, and the whole time my mind-set towards her is, "I have done everything that I can do to forgive you, to go past this, work on this, to bring the marriage back together. All these things that -- I'm starting to fall apart. These are things that you have done to me by your sin and by continuing to go on." And it was really -- I was falling apart and feeling self-righteous at the same time. I was doing really bad things, but somehow it all went back to her. And it wasn't until we got divorced, that there was nobody in the house to blame and I still had these issues that I had to work on myself and I had to get with God myself, such that when we finally came back together -- because, surprise, we did get remarried. That's the end of the story. When we finally got remarried, it didn't feel like accepting the prodigal back into the house. It felt like two prodigals getting back together.

God had just destroyed all that self-righteousness, and that was such a grace.

**PRISCILLA:** Yes.

**JORDAN:** And, you know, goodness, we still work on that every day.

Pride creeps back in, but at least now we know what the enemy is. It is that self-righteousness.

**PRISCILLA:** Yeah, absolutely.

**WES:** That's -- you-all's story is so filled with hope and forgiveness and grace and mercy and healing that I know that it has been and will continue to be an inspiration and encouragement for so many other people. And I reached out to Jordan because I knew that, just from the few brief interactions we've had on Facebook, that you have, as I said in my initial message to you, a high view of marriage, a low view of divorce, and a high view of grace, and I think that's where we have to land is that that's -- that has to be our perspective, is that we believe God can bring healing and grace and forgiveness no matter where you are, that God can bring and reconcile people even when it seems hopeless, amazingly so, but that there are rules. But I love -- again, coming back to what you said in the beginning, that these rules that are there are there for our flourishing and for our health because when we're left to our own devices, we don't know how to do -- we don't know how to make sense of marriage or life or anything, and that's why our pride gets us in trouble. So thank you for your humility, thank you for your ministry and your work in the kingdom.

Priscilla, you mentioned a minute ago a resource. I'd love for you to share that again, and I'll put that in the show notes, as well.

**PRISCILLA:** Yes, absolutely. It's Marriage Helper, and I think you can

just Google it. There's all kinds of free resources on YouTube, on their website, but then they also have some resources that come with a cost, which I highly recommend. They have a three-day workshop, and in that workshop you learn all types of things. It's more of a lecture style, so it's not like a scary therapy weekend where you're going in and having to share all your dirty laundry. It is very, very helpful and, I would say, life-changing. And even if you're at a point where you're like we don't even know that we could do this, I highly recommend attending that workshop because it will be life-changing regardless of what you decide to do in your marriage. Then they also have coaching. They have other courses that you can also purchase. Like I said, I just highly, highly, highly recommend Marriage Helper, Dr. Joe Beam and Kimberly Holmes. Dr. Joe Beam is the founder, and then Kimberly Holmes is the CEO, and they are just amazing people, as well.

**WES:** Fantastic. Well, thank you both so much. This has been incredibly encouraging. I appreciate you. I appreciate you taking the time for doing this and your work in the kingdom. Thank you both.

**JORDAN:** Thank you, Wes.

**PRISCILLA:** Thank you.

*Thank you so much for being part of the Radically Christian Bible Study podcast today. We hope that you've enjoyed this episode. I want to give a special thanks to Travis Pauley and to our McDermott Road church family for making this podcast possible. As always, we love you, God loves you, and we hope that you have a wonderful day.*