

# *“Practically Perfect”*

*Mark 10:2-9*

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Every other Monday I attend a weekly pastors Zoom meeting. It's very useful, you know, one of those iron sharpens iron kind of things. Inevitably the lectionary texts come up and when this week's lesson from Mark came up, without exception, every pastor was like, "***Nuh un. Not preaching that. No way. NOPE.***" You see like so many texts from both the Old and New Testaments that have been misused and abused to support crimes against humanity like genocide, slavery and hate crimes against inclusion, this scripture has been misused and abused to control, oppress and ostracize women for having the courage, strength and integrity to get out of marriages they originally believed were practically perfect in every way.

A young couple decided to wed. As the big day approached, they grew apprehensive. Each had a problem they had never before shared with anyone, not even each other.

The groom-to-be, overcoming his fear, decided to ask his father for advice. "***Dad,***" he said, "***I am deeply concerned about the success of my marriage. I love my fiancée very much, but you see, I have very smelly feet, and I'm afraid that my future wife will be put off by them.***"

"***No problem,***" said his dad. "***All you have to do is wash your feet as often as possible and always wear socks, even to bed.***" Well, to him this seemed a workable solution.

The bride-to-be, overcoming her fear, decided to take her problem up with her mom. "***Mom,***" she said, "***When I wake up in the morning my breath is truly awful.***"

"***Honey,***" her mother consoled, "***everyone has bad breath in the morning.***"

"***No, you don't understand. My morning breath is so bad, I'm afraid that my new husband will not want to sleep in the same room with me.***"

Her mother said simply, "***Try this. In the morning, get straight out of bed and head for the bathroom and brush your teeth. The key is not to say a word until you've brushed your teeth. Not a word,***" her mother affirmed. Well, she thought it was certainly worth a try.

The loving couple was finally married in a beautiful ceremony. Not forgetting the advice each had received, he with his perpetual socks and she with her morning silence, they managed quite well. That is, until about six months later.

Shortly before dawn, the husband woke to find that one of his socks had come off. Fearful of the consequences, he frantically searched the bed. This, of course, woke his bride, who without thinking, immediately asked, "***What on earth are you doing?***"

"***Oh, no!***" he gasped in shock, "***You've swallowed my sock!***"<sup>1</sup> 🤪🤪

Terrible joke, I know. But the point is all marriages are practically perfect in every way, that is, they're not. There are no perfect marriages which is perhaps why Jesus takes them so seriously.

Yet again the Pharisee's are trying to trick Jesus and box him into a corner. And yet again Jesus gives it right back to them turning their misuse and abuse of scripture into a life lesson about God's nature.

What is Jesus' trick? For every question about law, Jesus gives a relational answer. For every legal challenge, Jesus challenges back with a relational counter.

Jesus does this by contrasting the Pharisee's view of marriage with God's view from the beginning of creation. I like what Dr. Peter Butler says about Eve being of Adam. He says "***some of us may be tempted to say, 'What nonsense--a fairytale!' It may be helpful to know that the word that is used here, tsela, may mean a human rib bone, but, more often it refers simply to 'a side of something.'***" In the book of Jonah, this is the word that is used when we are told the boat rolled from side to side--from rib to rib. So, don't think of God removing a single rib from Adam, but dividing Adam into two human beings.

Dr. Butler continues, "***The point is this: in creating Eve out of Adam, not out of the dust like Adam, Adam and Eve were not merely like beings, they were two halves of the whole . . . thus establishing the equality of the man and the woman--they were created out of the same lump, as it were. They were both created in the image of God. They were not created competitive beings, but two beings who complete each other as one. Thus we have Adam's confession: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh . . .'***"<sup>2</sup>

God made everyone and everything to be in relationship.



Jesus teaches us today that the scriptures were not written to be used as *"tests,"* or *"laws,"* or *"weapons to wield power."* They were used to teach us about who we are in relationship with God, who we are in relationship with the world, who we are in relationship with each other, and who we are in relationship even with ourselves. The moment we begin to weaponize them, that's the moment we have entirely misunderstood the scriptures, and the One who wrote them.

Jesus came to us declaring a new kind of covenant, and a new kind of community –one based in mutual love, care, respect, and peace.

May we revel in the joy of the scriptures, and the Truths they reveal about us and about our lives. But even more so, may we revel in the joy of Jesus, our Savior –our Way, our Truth, and our Life. Advocate of Truth. Advocate of all.<sup>3</sup>

Friends, this is the day churches all over the world celebrate Worldwide Communion Sunday. We recall how often Jesus compared the kingdom to a wedding feast. The church he called his bride. The bread and the cup are themselves instruments of God's grace. As we take the blessed sacrament, we confess again our need for God's help, not only in our marriages and in our families, but in every aspect of our lives because the truth is, we're all practically perfect in every way.

Amen?!

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.jokes2go.com/jokes/5529.html>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://secondfirvinton.blogspot.com/2008/09/created-for-one-another-sermon-genesis.html>

<sup>3</sup> Wagner, Lori. *Empowering the Powerless*. (Christian Globe 2021).

