

## NO DIVORCE

A Family Talk by the Rev. Lawson Smith—2026

*Lessons:*

**Matthew 5:31-32.** And it has been declared that whoever shall send away his wife, let him give her a divorce. But I say to you, whoever shall send away his wife, outside of the reason of scortation, makes her commit adultery; and whoever shall wed her that is sent away commits adultery.

### **Matthew 19**

3. And the Pharisees came to Him, tempting Him, and saying to Him, “Is it permitted for a man to send away his wife for every cause?”

4. And He answering said to them, “Have you not read that He who made [them] from the beginning made them male and female,

5. and said, ‘On this account shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh’?

6. “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

7. They say to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a document of divorce, and to send her away?”

8. He says to them, “Moses, because of your hard-heartedness, permitted you to send away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.

9. “And I say to you that whoever shall send away his wife, except over scortation, and shall wed another, commits adultery; and he who weds her that is sent away commits adultery.”

10. His disciples say to Him, “If the case of the man be so with the wife, it is not expedient to wed.”

11. But He said to them, “All do not take in this word, but [they] to whom it is given.

12. “For there are eunuchs who were so born from the mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens. He that is able to take it in, let him take it in.”

**Conjugal Love 423.** [B]y the scortatory love opposite to conjugal love is meant the love of adultery when it is such that it is not regarded as a sin, nor as evil, nor dishonorable and against reason, but as permissible with reason. This scortatory love not only makes conjugal love the same as itself, but also ruins, destroys, and at length nauseates it.

**Conjugal Love 255.** *That adultery is the cause of divorce.* For this there are many reasons, which are in rational light, and yet at this day are concealed. It may be seen from rational light that marriages are holy, and that adulteries are profane; and thus, that marriages and adulteries are diametrically opposite to each other, and that when opposite meets opposite one destroys the other, to the very last spark of its life. It is so with conjugal love when a married man with determination and thus with set purpose commits adultery. With those who know something of heaven and hell these considerations come into a clearer light of reason; for they know that marriages are in heaven and from heaven, and that adulteries are in hell and from hell; and that

these two cannot be conjoined, just as heaven cannot be conjoined with hell, and that if they are brought together in a man, heaven instantly departs and hell enters.

This then is the reason why adultery is the cause of divorce. Therefore, the Lord says, "Whoever sends away his wife except for scortation, and marries another, commits adultery" (Mat. 19:9).

He says, if he sends away, except for scortation, and marries another he commits adultery, because sending away for this cause is the complete separation of minds, which is called divorce. But all other sendings away, for their causes, are the separations treated just above. If after these, another wife is married, adultery is committed, but not after divorce.

**Conjugal Love 457.** BECAUSE THE CONJUGIAL OF ONE MAN WITH ONE WIFE IS THE PRECIOUS JEWEL OF HUMAN LIFE, AND THE REPOSITORY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION....

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Children, the Lord wants to give us a very special present.

It is "the precious jewel of human life" (CL 457).

What is the precious jewel that the Lord wants to give us?

In the Heavenly Doctrine, the precious jewel is called "love truly conjugal."

It is when a man and a woman get married,

and they love the Lord and keep His commandments.

They love their marriage, because it is the way the Lord has taught us to live.

And they love and respect each other,

and they help each other do the good jobs the Lord gives them to do.

Love truly conjugal means you get to live with your best friend,

whom you trust completely,

because you know that he or she is working to follow the Lord.

And marriage is not just for the husband and wife.

What makes love truly conjugal so happy is that it serves the highest use of all,

and happiness comes with doing something useful.

The highest use of all is to have children and help them grow up

to become good, useful people, and then go to heaven.

This is the reason the Lord creates the universe:

so that people can be born and choose heaven,

where He can love them and take care of them and make them happy forever.

And in marriage, a husband and wife get to help the Lord, as of themselves,

with this highest use, by having and raising children.

Because marriage and love truly conjugal are so good and true and happy,  
the Lord has given us clear laws to protect marriage,  
and to protect us from evil spirits,  
who want to wreck marriage for us and make us miserable instead of happy.

We really need the Lord's laws because we are not angels yet.  
We start out in life tending to be selfish and stupid.  
Evil spirits trick us into thinking something will be good for us  
that actually is very bad.

So our Heavenly Father teaches us about marriage.  
First of all, He teaches us, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20, Deut. 5).  
This means, Do not mix the holiness, cleanness and purity of marriage  
with the filthiness of adultery.  
Adultery is when a married person lives with another person as if they were married,  
but they are not.  
He or she then mixes the holiness of his or her marriage  
with the profane, unholy state of adultery.  
The Lord warns us against this clearly: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

And in the New Testament, the Lord makes it even clearer.  
First, He warns us not to look at someone else's partner in order to lust after her, or him.  
Do not let your mind go to such a filthy place.

Then, He also taught us, Do not send away, that is, divorce, your partner  
and marry someone else.  
That also, the Lord says, would be committing adultery.  
For the same reason, even if you have never been married,  
you must not marry someone who wrecked his or her first marriage  
by committing adultery—  
or else you will be committing adultery too,  
by mixing the unholy state of an adulterer or adulteress with marriage.

Love truly conjugal can only be between one man and one wife.  
A person who has promised the Lord and his or her partner to be married to them,  
and then breaks that promise by divorcing their partner and marrying someone else,  
may imagine that he or she loves the second person,  
but really he or she just loves himself.  
That person is not following the Lord, who is the only source of true love.  
He or she is not cleaving—being firmly glued—to the first partner,  
as the Lord commands.  
He or she is putting asunder, breaking apart, what God has joined together.

Whether we are married or single, married for a long time or just starting out or in between,  
we can think carefully about whether we are loving marriage  
and guarding against any kind of adultery.

The Lord gives each us opportunities to flee from adultery as a sin against God,  
and in this way He can make our love of marriage grow stronger and clearer.

All marriages go through times when a husband and wife don't feel as close  
as when they first got married.

Couples disagree.

Sometimes one partner, or both, acts badly.

Partners might be mean or rude to each other.

They might break the commandment against murder by hating and being cruel.

They might steal from each other.

They might bear false witness against each other,  
telling nasty stories about each other.

They might blaspheme the Lord and His Word and the Church.

Evil spirits try every way they can to break up a marriage.

What does the Lord want us to do if such a situation arises?

The Lord urges us to work hard to make our marriage work.

This work can make a marriage stronger and closer than ever before.

First, we ourselves must practice repentance as diligently as we can.

We must search out the hurtful things we have been doing or saying,  
admitting that they are *our* fault, our poor choices,  
not our partner's fault.

We must pray every day, all the time, for the Lord's help to act differently,  
and begin a new life, a better way of treating our partner.

Second, the Lord says we should do our best to *act* with love, friendship and favor  
toward our partner,

even if he or she is not behaving well, and even if we do not *feel* loving and friendly.

We need to act the part, because the Lord tells us to,

in the hope that things will improve and feelings of love will return.

The Lord's teaching is, "Act precedes; man's willing follows" (AC 4353:3).

First, we must act as we know we should.

Then, gradually, the Lord can change our hearts.

The main thing to know, when we are first getting married and when we are married,  
is that marriage is a covenant, a promise, for life.

We must never divorce our partner, never give up on our marriage,  
except if our partner has completely destroyed the marriage by committing adultery.

Adultery is the only evil that is directly opposite to marriage.

Otherwise, even if things are very unhappy at home, we must not get divorced.

The Lord says that if need be, we can separate:

we don't have to share a bed or bedroom;

we don't even have to live in the same house.

But we cannot give up on our marriage and look for someone else.

The world around us today does not know the Lord's laws about marriage.

To the world it seems cruel and unreasonable that when partners are not getting along,  
they still have to stick it out.

But the world also does not know about love truly conjugal.

It hardly knows that *God* joins a husband and wife together into one flesh, one angel,  
and more and more as they follow Him.

It does not much know that raising children, with one father and one mother, for heaven,  
is the best, happiest job we can ever do, though it is also hard work at times.

When we trust in the Lord's promise of love truly conjugal,

and that our Heavenly Father knows what is best for us,

and that He gives us His laws because He loves us

and wants to protect us from evil spirits and from hell,

and we *do* what He teaches—especially when it's hard and we don't quite see why—

that's when the Lord can be closest to us and guide us to heaven.

To end, here is a prophecy and promise for the New Church:

31 Behold, the days are coming, says Jehovah, and I will cut a new covenant with the house  
of Israel, and with the house of Judah;

32 not according to the covenant that I cut with their fathers in the day [that] I held their hand  
firmly to bring them out from the land of Egypt; which covenant of Mine they made of none  
effect, although I was a Husband to them, says Jehovah.

33 For this shall be the covenant that I will cut with the house of Israel: After those days, says  
Jehovah, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be  
their God, and they shall be My people.

34 And they shall teach no more, a man his companion, and a man his brother, saying, Know  
Jehovah; for they shall all know Me, from the smallest of them to the greatest of them, says  
Jehovah; for I will pardon their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31)

*Amen.*