

Gospel of Matthew



Suggested responses to questions about Matthew 19:1-30

Note: Be sure to respond to all the questions yourself before reading the suggested responses in order to make the most of this study.

1. Matthew 19:1 specifies that the Pharisees questioned Jesus about his opinion of divorce in “the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.” This was the region of John the Baptist’s activity, and John was imprisoned and eventually beheaded for his vocal opposition to Herod’s marriage to his own brother’s wife, Herodias. The Pharisees may have had the ulterior motive of trying to enmesh Jesus in exactly the same trouble with Herod that led to John the Baptist’s death.
2. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 states: “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 bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man’s wife, and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring guilt upon the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance.” Instead of addressing this Deuteronomic law, Jesus goes back to Genesis 1:27 to cite God’s earliest revelation that clearly points to the indissolubility of marriage: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them,” and then Jesus cites Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Regarding the indissolubility of marriage, paragraph 1640 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “Thus *the marriage bond* has been established by God himself in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. This bond, which results from the free human act of the spouses and their consummation of the marriage, is a reality, henceforth irrevocable, and gives rise to a covenant guaranteed by God’s fidelity. The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom.”
3. In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus teaches: “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” Paragraph 2385 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “Divorce is immoral also because it introduces disorder into the family and into society. This disorder brings grave harm to the deserted spouse, to children traumatized by the separation of their parents and often torn between them, and because of its contagious effect which makes it truly a plague on society.”

Matthew Lesson 19 Suggested Responses

4. Paragraph 2380 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that adultery “refers to marital infidelity,” which is further defined as when two partners, of whom at least one is married to another party, have sexual relations. Paragraph 2381 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that “he [who commits adultery] does injury to the sign of the covenant which the marriage bond is, transgresses the rights of the other spouse, and undermines the institution of marriage by breaking the contract on which it is based. He compromises the good of human generation and the welfare of children who need their parents’ stable union.” In Matthew 5:28, Jesus extends the definition of adultery to include adulterous thoughts when he teaches: “But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
5. In Matthew 19:12, Jesus speaks about “eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” These Christians are those who imitate Jesus’ own celibacy in order to be court servants of the messianic King and of his bride and royal family, the Church. In 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, St. Paul lists some benefits of the single state: “The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord. . . . And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. . . . I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.”
6. Paragraph 916 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “In the consecrated life, Christ’s faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come.”
7. Paragraph 1658 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “We must also remember that the great number of *single persons* who, because of the particular circumstances in which they have to live—often not of their choosing—are especially close to Jesus’ heart and therefore deserve special affection and active solicitude of the Church, especially of pastors. Many remain without a human family, often due to conditions of poverty. Some live their situation in the spirit of the Beatitudes, serving God and neighbor in exemplary fashion. The doors of homes, the ‘domestic churches’ and of the great family which is the Church must be open to all of them. ‘No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone, especially those who ‘labor and are heavy laden.’”
8. Paragraph 1652 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “By its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory.”
9. Matthew 19:22 records that the rich young man becomes sorrowful after Jesus suggests that he sell everything and give the proceeds to the poor because “he had great possessions.” In 1 Timothy 6:9-10, St. Paul teaches: “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.”

10. In Matthew 19:26, Jesus responds to the disciples who are astonished at his teaching about how impossible it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God, by saying: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Genesis 18:14 records God’s response to Sarah’s doubt that she and Abraham would conceive a child in their old age: “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” Job 42:1-2 records these words of Job’s to God: “I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.” In Luke 1:37, the angel Gabriel foreshadows Jesus’ teaching, when he tells the Blessed Virgin Mary how it will come about that she’ll give birth to the Messiah even though she’s a virgin: “For with God nothing will be impossible.”

Responses to the Questions for Reflection will vary.

Matthew Notes