What did Jesus' disciples mean when they said, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry"? (Matthew 19:10)

ANSWER:

This statement by Jesus' disciples came after a challenging teaching He gave regarding divorce. The Pharisees approached Jesus, testing Him with a question:

> *Matthew 19:3*
> "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"

They were referring to a common debate of the time. According to Deuteronomy 24:1, Moses had permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce if he found "some indecency" in his wife. The school of Hillel (a Jewish rabbinic tradition) interpreted this loosely, allowing divorce for minor reasons—even if a wife spoiled a meal. On the other hand, the school of Shammai took a stricter view, saying only sexual immorality could justify divorce.

Jesus sided with the original intent of marriage as instituted by God in

> *Genesis 2:24:*
> "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

He replied in

> *Matthew 19:6:*
> "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

When the Pharisees questioned why Moses allowed divorce, Jesus responded:
"Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." (Matthew 19:8)

> *Then He added in (Matthew 19:9)*
> "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

This teaching was so strict and countercultural that the disciples said:
"If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." (Matthew 19:10)

What did they mean by this?
They were essentially saying: *"If marriage is that binding, and the only way out is through adultery, then maybe it's safer to stay single."* This reveals how seriously Jesus viewed marriage: not as a temporary agreement, but a lifelong covenant before God.

It also reflects a core Christian truth: marriage requires endurance, grace, and faithfulness—not just romantic love. Divorce is not to be treated casually or selfishly.

Biblical Implications for Us Today:

Jesus acknowledges

> *in Matthew 19:11–12 that not everyone can accept this teaching:*
> "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to

> whom it is given... Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

This means that not everyone is called to marriage. Paul later echoes this in

> *1 Corinthians 7:7–9 where he says:*
> "I wish that all were as I myself am [single]. But each has his own gift from God... to the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single... But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry."

Real-life Application:

- If your spouse is difficult, disrespectful, or emotionally cold – that's not a biblical reason for divorce.
- If your husband or wife loses their job, becomes sick, infertile, or disabled – you're still called to love and stay faithful.
- If you married an unbeliever or someone who drifts away from faith – you're still called to honor that covenant (see 1 Corinthians 7:12–14).
- Divorce is only permitted *"in the case of sexual immorality"* (Greek: *porneia*)—which includes adultery, not just disagreements or disappointments.

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So what does this teach us?
Marriage is not something to enter lightly. It is a covenant, not just a contract. It reflects Christ's relationship with the Church (Ephesians 5:25–27), which is based on self-giving love, sacrifice, and unbreakable commitment.

Therefore, before marrying, one should seriously consider the weight of that commitment. If you feel unprepared to love and endure in all seasons, it is wise—perhaps even godly—to remain single. As Jesus said, singleness can be a calling too, allowing one to serve God with greater focus.

> *Proverbs 21:9*"It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife." "

> *Proverbs 21:19*
>
> It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman."

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These verses remind us that a peaceful single life can be better than a conflicted marriage.

Final Word:
Think carefully. Marriage is beautiful, but also demanding. If God calls you to it, He will give you grace for it. But don’t rush in unprepared. Consider, pray, and choose wisely—for His glory.

God bless you.

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