It’s not good to be alone

God doesn’t want the man to be alone because the man is a social being. People need interpersonal relationships in order to grow toward their full potential. We need to talk with others and form friendships and societies in order not simply to survive but to flourish.

With this need in mind God searches for a partner for the man. The animals may make great pets, but they can’t give the man the true companionship he needs.

A suitable partner

The way in which God creates the woman shows that she shares the same nature and capacity of the man. The animals were formed from the earth, but she has been made of the same stuff, the same material, as the man. Only the man and woman can have a mutually loving and supportive relationship.

A husband and wife strive for unity in every aspect of their lives: emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual. By giving and receiving from each other as devotedly as possible, they witness to God’s love in the world.

“This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

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**MARK 10:2-16**

**Reading closely**
1. What all might people be thinking as the Pharisees approach Jesus?
2. What all might Jesus be thinking and feeling when he sees the Pharisees?
3. What are the Pharisees hoping will happen?
4. How does Jesus change the discussion?
5. How might the crowds and the Pharisees feel about Jesus’ response?
6. Why do you think the disciples question Jesus further about his response?
7. Why do people bring their children to Jesus?
8. Why do you think the disciples try to keep people from bringing children to Jesus?
9. How do you imagine the children reacting to Jesus?

**Living the word**
10. How do you decide whom to date, or how did you decide whom to marry?
11. If you’re married or want to marry, what do you want most in your marriage?
12. Do you think divorce is ever appropriate, and if so, under what circumstances?
13. Do you tend to think of God’s kingdom as a gift to receive or as something to earn?

**THE GOSPEL READING**

**A test of orthodoxy**
The Pharisees want to find out if Jesus is faithful to God’s laws. Some might also want to make Jesus answer in a way that will set the crowd against him. Jesus exposes their hidden agenda by making them answer their own question (vv.3-4).

Jesus also demonstrates his orthodoxy by quoting scripture. The passage from Genesis is more relevant than the case-specific laws that came later because Genesis 2:18-24 describes the marital relationship as God intended it to be.

**A radical return to marriage**
Jesus shifts the dialogue from divorce to marriage. He acknowledges that Moses permitted divorce, but explains that this reflects human failure not God’s will. Before human beings sinned, they acted with mutual love and care. Once sin entered the world, people too readily put their own interests before those of others, which weakened and sometimes destroyed the bond of marriage.

**Are there exceptions?**
A close reading of the Old Testament shows that divorce is forbidden or allowed depending on the circumstances. Jesus didn’t get bogged down in case studies, however, but reiterated what marriage should be.

When a husband and wife are being harmed by an irredeemable marriage, Jesus surely wouldn’t have wanted them to stay together. Instead of thinking only that such situations make divorce acceptable, we should also help people enter into and maintain holy and healthy marriages.

**The gift of the kingdom** (vv.13-16)
Jesus says the kingdom belongs to children not because children are nice, humble, or innocent — they aren’t always — but because children depend on other people to provide them with what they need. Moreover, children can’t earn what they receive. In the same way, we can’t earn God’s kingdom; God’s kingdom is a gift.

**PRAYER**

adapted from the Solemn Blessing for the Rite of Marriage

Almighty God,
strengthen the unity of those who have entered into marriage.

May peace reign in their hearts and in their home.

May they have true friends to stand by them, both in joy and in sorrow.

May they help and comfort all who come to them in need.

May the blessings promised to the compassionate be theirs in abundance.

After they have served you loyally in your kingdom on earth, welcome them into your kingdom in heaven.

We ask this through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.