

## **Malachi 2:10-16 — What Are God's Words On Dating and Marriage?**

**February 18, 2018**

Have you trusted someone that turned and stabbed you in the back? Maybe you were in junior high the first time it happened. You shared something confidential with your friend but he or she broke your confidence and shared your secrets with your friends. Your friend left you, shamed, devastated and destroyed you.

While our first experiences of betrayal began when we were young, for some, our deepest experience of betrayal happened when we became adults. Maybe that betrayal came from your spouse. Marriage is so intimate it provides either our greatest joys or our deepest pain. For some of us, it was a spouse that broke your trust and betrayed you most deeply. Even now, the things he or she did and the words he or she said are crystal clear in your mind. It has been years but the wound he or she inflicted in your heart is still bleeding. It refuses to heal.

Betrayal and infidelity are one of the most devastating feelings we can experience. This morning we are going to see how betrayal doesn't just hurt our friends and loved ones, it also drowns out relationship with God.

This morning, we continue our study in the book of Malachi. The subtitle of our study is "Restoring God's Favor." In Malachi, we see that God's people had fallen out of God's favor.

God's people were exiled into Babylon because of their sin, but by God's grace, after 70 years, God freed them and returned his people to Jerusalem to rebuild their land. While God was faithful to them, they were not faithful to him.

For the last two weeks, we saw the priests led the way in infidelity to God. Instead of protecting God's honor, they despised it. When they offered sacrifices, instead of giving God their best, they gave God garbage animals that nobody wanted. When it came to their attitude, instead of being grateful to serve, they were griping they had to serve. Last week, we saw they despised God not just in the sacrifices they offered but in the teaching they gave. They didn't faithfully teach God's Word, they played favorites. They were more interested in being popular with people than popular with God. God was so angry at their leadership, that they had led the way in despising God.

This morning, as we continue our study, Malachi moves from talking about the sins of the priests to talking about the sins of the people.

### **God calls us to faithfulness.**

**Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? Malachi 2:10 (ESV)**

God begins by asking three rhetorical questions.

**Have we not all one father?** This should be rather obvious. How many of us have more than one biological father? Nobody has 32 fathers. Each of us has one father. Malachi took what is true in the nuclear family and transferred it to the spiritual family. God's people in the Old Testament all looked to one father. His name was Abraham. Malachi was referring to God's covenant with Abraham to make them into a great nation.. All Jews trace their lineage back to Abraham and look to him as their father. Since everyone in ancient Israel looked to father Abraham for their roots, that means they were all part of the same family.

We treat family differently. We are loyal to family. We go out of our way to help family. When my boys went to school, there were times my younger son was picked on. I always told my boys to stick together. The little saying I taught my older son was, "If you pick on my brother, you pick on me." We are family. We stick together.

Malachi said the same thing. "Look around you. We are a big family. As family we should be looking out for one another. We should be caring for one another. We have a special loyalty to one another."

**Has not one God created us?** Not only did they have the same biological father but there is one God. He is the one who created them. This sounds like it is referring to the Genesis creation account. I don't believe it is. I believe Malachi was referencing Mt. Sinai when God formed his people into his nation. He chose them for himself. They agreed to live under God's laws and be a people set apart for God's praise and glory.

They are one family with special loyalty to each other. God chose them so they were a nation set apart for him.

...the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. Isaiah 43:21 (ESV)

This isn't just true in the Old Testament under the Old Covenant. This is also true for us in the New Testament under the New Covenant with Jesus Christ. We have Jesus. Jesus is the one we all look to. He is the one who put us together in the same family. This is why we call one another brothers and sisters in Christ. We are also in a special relationship with God as the Israelites were.

They were set apart to be different from the world under the old covenant. We are set apart to be different from the world under the new covenant.

**Why are we faithless to one another profaning the covenant of our fathers?** Malachi said they were family but they were being unfaithful to one another in the family. Faithless is the key word in this passage. It is used five times. Faithless is an innocuous word that doesn't sting. Its dictionary definition is much more poignant. It means to commit infidelity. Infidelity is what Malachi said was taking place. They were a family that was not sticking together and supporting one another. They were a family of infidelity. It was as if wives stole from their husbands. The children lied to their parents. The adult children robbed their elderly parents. There were a people of infidelity.

Not only were they hurting one another but they were profaning the covenant of their fathers. We don't typically use the word profane in this context. We use the word profane to speak about language. We talk about speaking with profanity. In the movie, "A Christmas Story," Ralphie had his mouth washed out with soap because he used profanity. Profanity is speaking a dirty word from what should be a clean mouth or speaking a dirty word in what should be a clean place. If someone used the "f-bomb" at church everyone would freak out because that is a dirty word spoken in what should be a clean place.

Malachi said God's people were not acting like family and protecting one another. Instead they were committing infidelity against one another. Instead of seeing themselves as privileged to be the chosen people of God, they were profaning him. They were giving God the "f-bomb." How did they do this? They

didn't give God the "f-bomb" with their words. They gave God the f-bomb with their lives. They chose to date and marry outside the family of God.

### **What are God's words to those who are single?**

Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god. May the Lord cut off from the tents of Jacob any descendant of the man who does this, who brings an offering to the Lord of hosts! Malachi 2:11–12 (ESV)

Our two key words, faithless and profanity, show up again. How were people committing infidelity and cussing God out? Single men were marrying the daughters of a foreign God. This also applies to women. They were dating and marrying unbelievers. That was like giving God the finger and being unfaithful to your spouse. Dating and marrying an unbeliever is one of Satan's best strategies to ruin your life and your legacy.

How does God describe this? He calls it an abomination. That word is a very strong word. It is reserved for describing witchcraft and idol worship. Dating and marrying a non-Christian is that offensive to God.

### **It was never God's plan for his children to date and marry outside of God's people in the Old Testament.**

The Bible talks about this in many places besides Malachi. In the Old Testament, some of you will remember the false prophet Balaam. The Moabite king hired him to curse Israel. Three times he tried to curse God's people but each time God turned his curse into a blessing. Finally, Balaam had an idea how to destroy God's people. He counseled the Moabite king to send Moabite women into the Israelite camp to seduce the Israelite men. Once these foreign women seduced the Israelite men and invited them to worship their false god, Balaam

knew God would fight against his own people. You can read about this in Numbers 25. This is exactly what happened. When God's people began dating, fornicating with and marrying Moabite women, God struck his own people with a plague that spread through their camp killing 24,000.

The only way this plague was stopped was by God's people taking radical action. They killed all the men who allowed these unbelieving women into their lives. If God was so angry at his people for dating and marrying women outside the covenant family that he killed 24,000 Israelites for doing it, we should think twice about dating or marrying anyone outside the family of God.

King Solomon, even though he was the wisest man in the world and God appeared to him twice, still walked away from God at the end of his life. The Bible tells us the reason why. It was because of his many foreign wives. The nation of Israel dissolved in half because of civil war after his reign. This civil war lasted for generations and cost countless lives. God's judgment was behind the splitting of the nation. The judgment took place because Solomon dated and married foreign women outside of the family of God.

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 1 Kings 11:1–2 (ESV)

Look what Joshua said would be the consequence of God's people dating and marrying outside of God's family.

For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these

nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you. Joshua 23:12–13 (ESV)

Joshua says dating and marrying outside of God's people is first of all a recipe for losing God's favor on your life. God will stop driving the nations out before you. This is the same thing we see happening in the book of Malachi. He described dating and marrying outside the family of God as a snare or a trap. The bait looks good. Dating them looks like the right choice, but it is the wrong choice. You will be caught in a trap where you will not be able to escape. It is not a pleasant trap. It is a painful trap. He described it like a whip to your side and thorns in your eyes. Imagine pushing thorns into your eyes. Can you feel the pain just thinking about it? That is the kind of pain that can be your by dating and marrying someone outside of the family of God.

**It is never God's plan to date or marry a non-Christian in the New Testament.**

I know some of you think your are smart. You are not planning on marrying a non-Christian, but you see nothing wrong with dating a non-Christian. You see nothing wrong with texting or constantly Snapchatting a non-Christian of the opposite sex. Don't be offended, but understand the reason you say that is because you are young and ignorant. Any time a man and woman start spending lots of time together it is very difficult to not begin bonding together. It just happens. This is especially true when people are in their 20s and their bodies are full of hormones.

We also need to remember that nobody truly starts dating somebody expecting to marry that person. People start dating but over time they find themselves emotionally attaching to one another so they get married.

God's complete prohibition against dating and marrying outside of the family of God is not just an Old Testament thing. It is a New Testament thing.

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. 1 Corinthians 7:39 (ESV)

If your husband dies, you can marry anyone you want, but only in the Lord. Paul said a widow must marry a Christian.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 2 Corinthians 6:14–16 (ESV)

God says don't unequally yoke yourself to an unbeliever. No matter how much you think the unbeliever is the perfect man or woman for you, the Bible says you are wrong. While you may have many things in common, your bottom line life and values are totally different. If you date and marry someone outside the family of God you will build your life together from two completely different sets of blueprints.

When the Bible talks about unequal yoking, in the historical context it refers to only placing oxen of equal strength and temperament in a yoke together so they can work together. Since yoking oxen are not part of our world, the best way to think of this is tying together the collars of a cat and a dog. Can you tie your cat and dog together and take them for a walk down the street? Absolutely



not! They are incompatible in their very natures. They is why a believer and unbeliever must not date and marry.

Paul said it is like trying to partner righteousness and lawlessness. This is like a police officer marrying a woman that is a drug dealer. It doesn't work.

It is like trying to mix light and darkness. They don't mix. Every time you turn on the light switch, darkness goes away.

It is like trying to mix Christ and Belial, which means Satan. Do Jesus and Satan get along? Do Jesus and Satan go out for dinner and snuggle on the couch? Absolutely not.

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? Can you mix a worship service in a Muslim mosque with a worship service in a Christian church? Absolutely not!

Paul said we are God's people. We are God's family. God dwells among us. God dwells in us. Intentionally dating an unbeliever is like cussing God out. It is saying what I want to do with my sexual life is something out of Jesus' control. Do you think God finds that offensive? Does anyone see the seriousness of this issue in God's eyes?

**This is not a racial thing. It is a religious thing.**

Some people misunderstand what is happening. They see this as race supremacy. They see this as cultural superiority. They see this from the lease of Nazi Germany thinking it was a superior race. That is absolutely not what was happening.

The Bible tells us when God led Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt there were many Egyptians that left Egypt with them. The Egyptians that left with the Israelites turned from the gods of Egypt and were worshipping the one true God of the universe. They left with the people of God because they wanted to identify themselves with the people of God. They were welcomed to be part of God's people. In the Old Testament sense those Egyptians became people of God so they were welcomed into the family of God.

Another example is Ruth. She was a Moabitess. The Moabites were despicable to the Israelites. But Ruth left the Gods of Moab. She turned to follow the one God of the universe and become part of the people of Israel. She became an Old Testament type of Christian. She was welcomed into the people of God not because of her bloodline but because of her new spiritual line. She even became part of the blood line of Jesus. Understand when the Bible tells us to avoid dating and marrying an unbeliever it is not a racial thing, it is a religious thing.

### **How serious is the sin of dating and marrying an unbeliever?**

We think that who we marry is our business. God says, "I am your father. Who you date and marry is my business." We think who we marry will not influence anyone because it is our choice. Who we date and marry influences everyone else. If you date and marry outside the family of God, how do you think that affects your family? How much pain does that put in your parents' hearts? As Christians, we are supposed to offer hospitality. After you marry someone that doesn't love Christ, how much hospitality can you offer in your home when your

spouse is not interested in having Christians over to your home? How will it feel to attend church every Sunday by yourself? How will it be when you are the only one teaching your kids about Jesus because your spouse doesn't care about Jesus? How will it be when your life hits hard times and you can't cry out to God as a couple? You can only cry out to God alone.

I know some of you are creating excuses for why you can date people outside the family of God. Just stop it. You think you are the exception to the rule. If dating and marrying outside the faith ruined Solomon, the wisest man in the world, if dating and marrying outside the faith ruined Samson, the strongest man in the world, what makes you think dating and marrying someone outside the faith won't damage your life and your witness?

Let's look at this statistically. Studies say the highest divorce rates are from interfaith couples. Those are couples of different religious backgrounds that choose to marry. That is a Hindu marrying a Muslim or a Christian marrying an atheist. Interfaith marriages have the highest rate of divorce.

What is the lowest divorce rate? It is between two Bible-believing, Jesus-loving, church-attending evangelical Christians.

Missionary dating leads to a miserable marriage. Missionary dating is using profanity against God with your life instead of your words. Missionary dating is infidelity against your brothers and sisters in Christ.

### **What are the right and wrong ways to approach singleness?**

If you are single, what should you do? Let me give you five wrong ways to approach singleness and one right way to approach singleness.

1. **Sin.** This is to get tired of your loneliness so you decide to sin. You start dating a non-believer. You move in with somebody. You start sleeping with someone. It is thinking you must find a warm body of the opposite sex no matter who it is. You don't even care if the person is an atheist. This is not just sin, it is rebellion. It is not trusting God's will and God's timing but taking matters into your own hands. Choosing to sin will harm the most important relationship you have, the one you have with Jesus. Single mothers, any man that does not stand in solidarity with you when it comes to your relationship with the God-man is the wrong man. Don't let singleness lead you to sin.
2. **Give up hope.** This is when people have been single for a while so they are becoming bitter over their singleness. They lock their hearts in a vault. They decide to stop dating and stop caring. They no longer pray for a spouse because it feels like a waste of words. This is another wrong way to handle singleness. Don't give up hope. Trust God's timing. Submit to his will for this season of your life.
3. **Settle for less.** Maybe when you began looking for a spouse, you had a long list of qualities for your ideal mate. Now you are tired of waiting so your list is much shorter. At one time you were a woman looking for a man like a Clark Kent that loves Jesus. Now you will settle for anyone of the opposite sex that is breathing. Choosing to settle just to get married is not the right way to go. Keep your list but make sure it is a reasonable list. Make sure at the top of your list you are looking for a man or woman that seriously loves Jesus. If you get that right, many other things work themselves out. Don't settle because

you are afraid of being single. I recommend you need to keep two lists. One list is the list of qualities you want in a person to marry. The other list is a list of qualities you want to be for the person you will marry. The fastest way to find the right person is to focus on being the right person. When you are being the right person God usually brings the right person to you. Don't settle for someone just because you are afraid of being single. Keep your list, pray, trust God, meet people and wait. Remember it is better to be single and wish you were married than to be married and wish you were single.

4. **Beat yourself up.** If you are single a long time, it is easy to start beating yourself up. You start thinking there must be something wrong with me. I am damaged goods. Nobody wants me. Nobody loves me. It is easy to use your singleness as a club to beat yourself up. Sometimes there is nothing wrong with you if you are single. God may be allowing you to go through a tough period of singleness, to mature you, to rid you of selfishness and prepare you for marriage. Hard times are the most maturing times. Another reason God may have you single for a while is because God may be focusing on maturing the person he wants to be your spouse. If you were to meet them before God was ready with him or her, it would be a mess, not a match between you.
5. **Fixate on marriage.** These are person that so desperately want to be married that pursuing a mate becomes their full-time job. They have profiles on every Christian dating site. They lie on their profiles to make themselves look better than they are. They Photoshop their pictures. This is the single lady that even if she has to check the mail on Saturday, she wears high heels

in case somebody sees her. Men can also be this way if they fixate on finding a mate. The problem with this mindset is people end up more in love with the institution of marriage than their mate in marriage. This over-fixation is not healthy.

6. **Turn to Jesus who understands.** This is a healthy response to singleness. Jesus was single. Even though Jesus was single, he lived the perfect life. Even though Jesus didn't have any children, he left a legacy. Even though Jesus has relationships with the opposite sex, he didn't sin with the opposite sex. Jesus had a significant life even though he didn't have a married life. When you think your life may not be significant because of singleness, remember Jesus. Jesus understands the struggle of singleness Pour your heart out to him, and as it says in the book of Hebrews, you will receive grace and mercy to help in your time of need.

### **What are God's Words to those who are married?**

And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring Malachi 2:13–15 (ESV)

As these verses begin, we find God's people at God's altar weeping with tears. God is not accepting their offerings. God is not looking with favor on their lives. God was ignoring their worship. Why? It is because the married men were being unfaithful to their wives.

It is that same word, faithless. They were unfaithful. They were committing infidelity against their wives. God didn't like it one bit.

## God is a witness between you and the wife of your youth.

On our wedding days, we sign marriage licenses that must be signed by two witnesses to make it official. There is a difference between a wedding by the Justice of the Peace and a wedding in a church. A wedding by the Justice of the Peace leaves you married in the eyes of the state. A wedding in the church is asking God to unite you as one, not just asking the state to recognize you as one.

Witnesses are not just to sign wedding certificates. They are to help a couple make it through the hard times of their marriage. They are to hold their feet to the flame to stay together when the marriage gets tough. In a church wedding, God is a witness at the wedding. He will hold a couple together. In this passage in Malachi, God is doing his job as a witness. He has shut off his blessing on these men because they are not treating their wives faithfully.

What was exactly happening in this passage in Malachi? These men were letting their wives bear their children. When the women became a little older and didn't look like a 20-year-old in a magazine, they divorced their wives to marry younger pagan ladies. God was not happy. They were breaking their marriage vows.

## How does marriage bond a couple?

This text says there are four ways a couple is bonded in marriage.

1. **She is your wife by covenant.** This refers to a promise. When two people get married, they promise to stay committed to one another with fidelity, for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Marriage is a

promise with God as your witness that you will be committed to someone no matter what happens in life. Divorce is breaking your promise before God.

2. **She becomes one with you sexually.** This refers back to Genesis 2 where it says a man shall leave his father and mothers and be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

With the promise of exclusivity comes the privilege of sexuality. The reason sexuality is limited to the promise of exclusivity is because sex literally bonds a couple together. Through intimacy and your commitment before God you become one flesh. That is why sex should not happen until the wedding night. It bonds a couple. You make the promise of exclusivity then bond sexually, not the other way around.

3. **She is your companion, your best friend.** Companion means friendship. Marriage is not just a sexual partnership. It is a friendship. In your marriage partner you should find your best friend. This is why in Song of Solomon it says:

His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. Song of Solomon 5:16 (ESV)

Your spouse is not just your lover. Your spouse is your friend. Marriage is about friendship.

4. **The Holy Spirit knits you together.** Malachi teaches us that Christian marriage is not just sexual and relational but it is spiritual. God promises to take a husband and wife that are Christians and when they marry he puts a



portion of his spirit in each of them and he uses that portion of his spirit to knit them together and to draw them together. This is why a Christian couple can pray together. This is why they can forgive one another like Christ has forgiven them. There is no closer marriage than a Christian marriage because the Holy Spirit draws a couple together and binds them together.

Marriage is about a promise to be faithful to your wife which is made before God; your sexuality knits you as one flesh; your wife is to be your closest friend, and the Spirit of God draws you together and binds you together. This is why it was a hideous thing for these men to divorce their believing wives to go after younger pagan women. Do you see the seriousness of this sin? Do you see why it is like profanity in the face of God?

Is there ever a time divorce is allowable? While I can't get involved in this topic deeply, I would like to cover it briefly.

### **When does the Bible say divorce is allowable?**

1. **Death.** When a spouse dies, a marriage is dissolved.

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Romans 7:2 (ESV)

2. **Adultery.** Adultery is like putting a torpedo into the hull of the marital ship. It is a breach of the sexual exclusivity portion of the covenant. It is also a breach of the companionship part of the covenant.

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Matthew 5:32 (ESV)

3. **Abandonment.** While the Bible tells us believers are always to seek to reconcile a broken relationship, if an unbeliever abandons a believing spouse, the believer is free to remarry.

But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. 1 Corinthians 7:15 (ESV)

The big question is how should we think about the situation of one believer choosing to abandon another believer? The one who claims to be a Christian yet leaves their spouse and refuses to restore the relationship is acting like an unbeliever.

4. **What about persistent physical abuse?** Some people claim persistent physical abuse also qualifies for divorce. This is not directly addressed in Scripture probably because it is self-evident. While I am all for protecting women, I am still cautious when it comes to using this line of reasoning for a divorce. I have seen people claim they have a legitimate reason for a divorce based on abuse but they never claim physical abuse but rather emotional abuse. A husband or wife yelled at them. Be cautious about using this reason for divorce unless there is literal abuse taking place.

#### What else should I know about divorce?

1. **If you have grounds for a divorce, that doesn't mean you must get a divorce.** Some marriages go through hard times. Sometimes a spouse may be guilty of sexual immorality or even adultery. While those are grounds for divorce, it doesn't mean you must get a divorce. Many couples have faced infidelity, and with repentance and seeking Jesus' forgiveness, come out on the other side. Yes, it is hard to work through but you can make it through.

2. **Do not make the decision to divorce in isolation.** Seek wise counsel. Seek your church leaders. Seek your life group leader. Don't go to your divorced friends and ask their advice. I can tell you what they will say. I know people who made their decision for divorce in isolation and refused counsel. It was a bad decision.
3. **Don't make the decision in haste.** You don't rush into marriage so you don't rush out of marriage. You took six to 12 months to plan your wedding; you need just as long or longer before you end your wedding. You don't come home from work after having a bad day and decide to burn your marriage to the ground.
4. **Don't make the decision in lust.** Some people are going through a difficult season in their marriage and have grounds for divorce, but while they are considering divorce they are also considering a relationship with someone new. Never make a decision to divorce in lust. That is the wrong way to divorce.
5. **Never divorce because you want to. Only divorce because you have to.** Only divorce after you have prayed, waited, tried, and gone to counseling but the infidelity continues. You tried but your spouse abandoned you and never came home. You want to make it work but they went to the lawyer. They have the paperwork. The divorce is happening even if you don't sign the papers.
6. **Before you divorce, think about your children.** Malachi said, "What was God seeking? Godly offspring." In Malachi, we know the middle-aged Jewish men were divorcing their godly wives to marry younger pagan wives. Malachi

said, “Think about your children. Think about what you are doing to your children when you divorce.” You are tearing out their heart. You are not passing on your faith. You are ruining their faith. They will spend half their time with Mom and half with Dad. Holidays and summers will be hard. Instead of seeing their parents work through hard times, the model they have in front of them is to give up in hard times. In Malachi we have men thinking with their hormones. Malachi said, “Stop thinking with your hormones and start thinking about your kids!” The best way to pass the Christian faith to the next generation is to marry a Christian wife and stay with her until one of you passes into the arms of the Lord.

### **How can I start and finish my marriage well?**

So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. “For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless. Malachi 2:15–16 (ESV)

#### **Guard your spirit and don’t be faithless in your dating.**

Twice Malachi said to guard yourself in your spirit and don’t be faithless. Guard yourself in your spirit and don’t profane your relationship with Christ and commit infidelity to the family of God by dating an unbeliever. Be very careful who you date. Guard your heart and do not let yourself develop an emotional attachment with someone that is not a Christian. If you don’t know if the person is a solid Christian, talk to him or her long enough to know that before you go on a date. You must guard your heart.

### **Guard your spirit and don't be faithless in your marriage.**

The same is true for those of us who are married. Guard your heart. Don't let any woman other than your wife or any man other than your husband into your heart. Be careful of business relationships. Be careful how close you get with others at work. Be careful when you travel. When you see someone of the opposite sex that you find attractive at the YMCA, bounce your eyes and immediately look away. Why? God tells us to guard our hearts.

### **Remember your legacy.**

Malachi 2:16 is one of the most difficult verses to translate in the entire Old Testament. Some of you that have the 1984 NIV which will have a famous translation that says, "God says, 'I hate divorce.'" That is the original translation given in the 1611 King James. It is a possible translation. The ESV we use has a different translation which appears more accurate. It simply says the one who does not love his wife hates her and divorces her. When he does that, he covers his garment with violence. "Covers his garment with violence" is a figure of speech meaning your reputation, the legacy you leave behind with your life, is not one of love but of violence and pain.

The violence is the broken heart of your wife when she finds you are leaving. The violence is every time she cries herself to sleep. The violence is the shame and the poverty she bears in the years that follow. The violence is the broken heart of your children when they see their parents torn apart. Remember the legacy of violence that divorce leaves behind, especially in a situation like we

see in Malachi where God's men were walking away from the godly women who bore their children to chase pagan wives.

May we be men and women who guard our hearts so we only date those who love Christ and we stay faithful to our spouses so we start and finish marriage. This means the legacy of our marriages will be one of love, not violence for our children and the generations to come.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

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