

# Mark 10:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

## Analysis

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Pharisees came to Jesus 'and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him' (ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν εἰ ἔξεστιν ἀνδρὶ γυναῖκα ἀπολῦσαι, πειράζοντες αὐτόν). The verb 'tempting' (peirazontes, πειράζοντες) indicates malicious intent—not genuine inquiry but attempted entrapment. This was a controversial issue in first-century Judaism: the school of Hillel permitted divorce for virtually any cause; the school of Shammai restricted it to sexual immorality. Any answer Jesus gave would alienate one faction. Additionally, John the Baptist was executed for condemning Herod's unlawful marriage (Mark 6:17-18)—Jesus was in Herod's territory (Perea), so strict teaching on marriage could provoke similar persecution. The Pharisees' question was calculated to create political or theological difficulty. Jesus' response transcends the debate by returning to creation ordinance (vv. 6-9).

## Historical Context

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Deuteronomy 24:1-4 permitted divorce if a man found 'some uncleanness' in his wife, but the phrase's meaning was debated. Rabbi Hillel (died AD 10) interpreted broadly—divorce permitted for trivial causes (burning food, finding a prettier woman). Rabbi Shammai (died AD 30) interpreted strictly—only for sexual immorality. This debate dominated Pharisaic discussion in Jesus' time. The question's political danger stemmed from Herod Antipas' unlawful marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife (Mark 6:17-18)—John's condemnation led to his execution. Jesus was traveling through Herod's jurisdiction, making strict

marriage teaching potentially dangerous. Yet Jesus boldly taught God's creation design (vv. 6-9), prioritizing truth over political safety.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does the Pharisees' malicious questioning contrast with genuine truth-seeking, and how should we guard against similar manipulation of Scripture for political ends?
2. What does Jesus' willingness to teach difficult truth despite political danger model about prioritizing God's Word over personal safety?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτόν εἰ  
And came to him G3588 the Pharisees G5330 and asked G1905 him G846 Is it  
G2532 G4334 G5330 G1905 G846 G1487

ἔξεστιν ἀνδρὶ γυναῖκα ἀπολῦσαι πειράζοντες αὐτόν  
lawful for a man his wife to put away tempting him  
G1832 G435 G1135 G630 G3985 G846

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 23:13** (Resurrection): But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

**John 8:6** (Parallel theme): This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

