

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Personal Relationships - Part 3 Divorce

Text: Matthew 5:31-32

Introduction: This is by far, one of the most difficult texts to preach, since it affects many, even in the church. But it also has many different scenarios, of which I am not able to cover in a single setting. But what we are going to do is look at what the Bible has to say about divorce and marriage. There are some of you who have been through the pains of divorce. I hope today you are encouraged, to live for Him in your current state.

Let's start off today with some real life stats about divorce. In Australia, since 2020, the divorce rate has increased some 200% and in Turkey 400%. Here are the stats for the USA, 45% of all first marriages end in divorce, 60% of second marriages and 73% of third marriages. According to a recent research study here are some likely reasons a person will get divorced.

- Age disparity
- More money spent on engagements and weddings
- A lot of co-workers of the opposite sex
- Living together before marriage

To make things really easy in Georgia, you can get a divorce online for as low as \$99. And it is a guaranteed court approved divorce. We should not be surprised at the low view of marriage today, which results in the divorce. In 1970 a British physician said in his book *The Death of the Family* that we should abolish the family altogether. He claims it is the device for western imperialistic view. At the height of the women's feminist movement in the 60's Kate Millet maintains "*the family unit must go because it is the family that has oppressed and enslaved women.*"

A Harvard research professor lists these possible trends that are most destructive to the family, mothers unnecessarily working outside the home, frequent family moves, the invasion of media, lack of moral control and lack of communication in the home.

Application: We all know someone, or have experienced the effects of divorce on children, parents and those involved. It does not matter the entirety of fault, it has some serious side effects. Knowing this, we should be concerned about the problem. There are four primary views on divorce today.

- Divorce is not permissible under any circumstance for any reason
- Divorce and remarriage are permissible for any reason or no reason
- Divorce is permitted under certain circumstances but remarriage isn't permitted
- Divorce and remarriage are permitted under certain circumstances

POINT 1 - THE TEACHINGS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES (Vs. 31)

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In Jesus' day the teaching on divorce, and by extension remarriage, was liberal. One could divorce and remarry for any reason whatsoever. The only requirement was the paperwork, a certificate of divorce. At this time a man could divorce his wife for any trivial reason, burning his meal, embarrassing him in front of his friends. Jesus made reference to OT law about divorce, cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

This law does not commend divorce, in fact, it's a narrow, specific statement dealing with the matter of adultery. Even through Moses, God permitted divorce with a certificate, He did not condone or command divorce.

But why the certificate of divorce? The text suggests, or perhaps assumes, that a divorce on proper grounds, accompanied by a certificate, was permitted. Even on the grounds of adultery, divorce was permitted in the law of Moses as an alternative to capital punishment (Leviticus 20:10-14). What God has granted as a rare permission was turned into a legal right.

POINT 2 - THE TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible's teaching on divorce cannot be understood apart from its teaching on marriage. Genesis 2:24 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." It was God's design not man's in marriage. Thus marriage is God's ordained institution. From the beginning God intended monogamous, lifelong marriage to be the pattern of man and woman. In marriage, man and woman are so closely united, they become one flesh, which involves both spiritual and physical. The Lord created intimacy, union between two people to be one.

A divinely created union was corrupted by the fall. Genesis 3:16 "To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." For the man, Genesis 3:17-19 "Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

Application: The fall distorted and perverted the marriage relationship. As Dr. John MacArthur says, "Divorce is like cutting off an arm or leg because he has a splinter. Instead of dealing with whatever trouble arises between husband and wife, divorce tries to solve the problem by destroying the union."

Matthew 19:1-9 Jesus affirms God's design for marriage and addresses the question of the bill of divorcement. Cf. Malachi 2:13-16, many today make a claim that God has told them to get a

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divorce. Certainly there's no Scripture for that position, and what we must acknowledge is divorce, no matter the circumstances, is always a product of sin.

The entire book of Hosea is a picture of God's forgiving and patient love for Israel, dramatized by Hosea's forgiving and patient love for his wife, Gomer. She prostituted herself, forsook Hosea, and was unfaithful to him in every possible way. But the heart of the story was Hosea was forgiving and faithful no matter what she did¹. God is faithful to us, even in our times of disobedience. Ephesians 5:22-32 is the premier text of the NT on marriage and it's design.

POINT 3 - THE TEACHING OF JESUS

Jesus confirms without proper or allowed cause for divorce, that man who marries a divorced woman or the woman again marries, commits an act of adultery. It is rendered by some that an unbiblical divorce in the past, and now faithfully married, serving the Lord, one must leave his current wife and reunite with the one before. I am at the place in my conviction that the sinful act committed then, and marrying was an act of adultery, but knowing the wrong, asking for forgiveness and living as you are now faithful does not mean you're living in adultery. 1 Corinthians 7:19-20 "*Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.*"

Matthew 19:1-9 Jesus answers the question about the bill of divorcement. The main question answered was the why the bill of divorcement, the answer, because of the hardness of your hearts. There was a condition issued concerning adultery. Or as the word used in the text means any sort of illicit sexual behavior in or outside the bonds of marriage. The bill of divorcement was designed to take the place of the death penalty, cf. John 8:1-11.

CONCLUSION APPLICATION

For those who have been through the pains of divorce, for whatever reason, maybe you were in sin and did so in violation of the commands of God. But now, your faithful and serving the Lord in your marriage, what may have been a violation of God's command, recognizing you were wrong, repenting and now committed to your marriage, you're not living in adultery nor should you abandon your spouse now and go back.

In your marriage today, remember that Christ is the center of that marriage, and your marriage reflects how you view God.

¹ John MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew, pp.314