

Title: What the Bible says about divorce

Passages: Matthew 19:3-12

Introduction

Research on impacts of divorce - even 10 years afterwards:

- Adults
 - the stress of being a single-parent never lightens
 - The fear of aloneness doesn't wane
 - Anger still exists between former spouses and impacts the children.
 - Adverse physical effects
- Children
 - Fear of taking sides to feel more protected
 - Feeling rejected without continuous support from fathers.
 - Boys become insecure in their masculinity. Girls become insecure in their relationships with men.

Malachi 2:16

"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."

- Reflects God's grief over divorce
- Therefore, divorce should be avoided except for the narrowly-defined circumstances in the Bible.

Passage:

Matthew 19:3-12

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

EXPOSITION

God's original plan and design is life-long covenant monogamous marriage.

Matthew 19:3-6

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- Context: in the time of Jesus, some rabbis said one could divorce for anything (ex: spoiling a dish)

In disputes, consider:

James 4:1-3

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

- sin is always present.

OLD TESTAMENT

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

- “he has found some indecency in her” - what is “indecency”?
- Passage assumed divorce was happening among the Israelites and assumed the woman is able to re-marry after divorce.

Leviticus 21:7

They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled, neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband, for the priest is holy to his God.

Deuteronomy 22:19

and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name upon a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife. He may not divorce her all his days.

Jeremiah 3:8

She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.

- All these passages are under the Mosaic Covenant
- Today, we look to the New Covenant with Jesus Christ.

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 19:8

He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

- Divorce is permitted but it was not part of God’s design (“from the beginning it was not so”)

Matthew 19:9

And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Sexual Immorality (“porneia”)

- narrow grounds whereby divorce is permissible (but it is not mandated).
- Includes not only adultery but also other acts as well.
- What falls under the exception? Habitual unrepentant sexual sin in someone’s sin that breaks the covenant of marriage

Matthew 19:10

The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”

- Cultural response to God’s standard. Maybe it’s better to stay single than “trapped” unhappy in a life-long marriage.

- Truth: Marriage should not be treated lightly. But God is there to help you.

Matthew 19:11-12

But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”

- With God, all things are possible.
- Only the Christian can accept the Christian ethic.
- Only by the help of Jesus Christ can one develop the love that true marriage requires.
- Without the help of God, it is almost impossible for a marriage to survive.

Key Points

- Divorce and re-marriage is permissible in the event of adultery by a spouse. It is not sin.
- God allows divorce but never commands it.

Mark 10; Luke 16 (parallel passages)

Mark 10:11-12

And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Luke 16:18

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

- These do not include the reference to the exception of adultery
- Why? It was because there was no dispute among the audience of Mark/Luke that it was permissible grounds of divorce.

Compare: Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:27-28

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- Passage does not explicitly reference assumed exception about one’s wife. Clearly not sin of lust to look at one’s own wife but exception is well understood.

Matthew 5:31-32

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 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.

APPLICATION

If a Christian and have been through a divorce:

- ***Jesus understands your suffering deeper than anyone else and is willing to walk with you through the darkest valleys.***

Hebrews 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Jesus knows what desertion means deeper than any other human friend.
- ***Live as a child of God. Talk to yourself of God's promises and His truths; don't merely listen to yourself.***

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Children who have suffered from divorce:

- ***don't live under what has happened in the past.***

1 Peter 1:18-19

knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

- whatever baggage you have, put it down at the cross of Christ, receive mercy and grace, and move forward.
- Don't allow anger and bitterness about the past control you.
- In God's mercy and wisdom, He allowed you to go through difficult trials which we do not fully understand.
- Give forgiveness of your parents who have hurt you. As receive forgiveness in Christ, extend forgiveness.

For those abandoned and cheated by others:

- ***receive God's comfort.***

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

If you have wrongly divorced a spouse and re-married another:

- Confess
- Ask for forgiveness from your former spouse and children under marriage
- Focus on your current marriage.
 - Not called to divorce your current spouse and go back.
 - Make this count for God's glory.

Next Week:

1 Corinthians 7:10-17

To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 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. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.