

Title: What the Bible says about divorce and remarriage

Passages: Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-17

Introduction

Divorce's heartbreak is well-researched:

- A well-regarded study tracked people after a divorce after 5, 10, 15 years
- Anger continued to be felt by both adults
- Children continued to feel intensely lonely

Passage:

Matthew 19:3-10

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."

Summary Recap from prior sermon:

Pharisees question

- When able to divorce?

Jesus: Point to God's original design

- One man and one woman in life-long covenant relationship until death separates them.

Only exception: Sexual immorality

- Broad term that includes adultery, incest, prostitution

Re-marriage

- Permissible in the event of "Sexual Immorality"

Disciples reaction:

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

Parallel passages: Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18

Passage:

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.

EXPOSITION

To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord):

- this concerns a situation that Jesus had not faced during his years of earthly ministry.
- Note: all writers of Scripture are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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- Situation: Marriages consisting of one believer and one non-believer.

Specific Situation: Abandonment

But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. (v.15a)

- specific situation by which divorce is permissible: abandonment

In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

In such cases

- “in such cases” = similar cases
- Meaning = Situations similarly destructive to adultery and desertion / abandonment of a spouse.

Compare: if wording was meant to limit to a particular situation (only adultery or desertion), the wording would have said so. See examples:

1 Corinthians 11:22

What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

2 Corinthians 8:10

And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it.

enslaved.

- “enslaved” = trapping spouse in slavery
 - Term not used elsewhere in Scripture to describe marriage

Unique situations that trap a spouse in slave-like conditions that can only be remedied by divorce:

- *Abuse of spouse*
 - Abuse is worse than desertion because it is repetitive malice.
 - Abusing spouse is causing the separation
 - Note: divorce is not always permissible where a spouse claims some type of verbal or physical abuse.
 - Here: abuse is such severity.
- *Abuse of children*

- *Credible threats of physical, serious harm or murder*
- *Incorrigible or irreparable alcohol or drug addiction*
 - Accompanied by regular lies, deceptions, thefts, and/or violence - so destructive to the marriage
- *Incorrigible or irreparable gambling addiction*
- *Incorrigible or irreparable porn addiction*

“Incorrigible or irreparable”

- meaning = one who has no desire or intent to change any aspect of their life.

Proverbs 18:17

The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.

- Each situation and each side needs to be fully heard and carefully, sensitively handled.

Perceived Objections:

- “In the case of the abuse, why not counsel life-long separation rather than divorce?”
 - Response: this would leave the spouse enslaved.
- “This would open the flood-gates for needless divorce”
 - Response: Genuine effort to save the divorce should be done repeatedly.
- “Staying in an abusive marriage can be a witness to others.”
 - Response: Leaving a marriage can be a better witness
- “Sometimes God calls their children to be in suffering in marriage.”
 - Responsive: God sometimes calls people to escape suffering

Exodus 20:2

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Matthew 6:13

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 10:23

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

1 Corinthians 7:21

Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)

- If there is a possibility to be out of prolonged suffering, sometimes God will call them.

Invalid grounds for divorce

- “My spouse isn’t a Christian”
 - But see: 1 Co 7:10-15
- “I need to get out for the sake of my kids”
 - But you may be a good example for the family to live your life in front of your kids.
- “Irreconcilable differences”
 - But while marriages can be very hard, the covenant of marriage involves hard times that is making you more holy
- “We are no longer in love”
 - But Biblical love is different. It is a commitment you make before God
 - God even calls us to love our enemies. How can not love another?
 - Feelings will follow commitment.
- “Married wrong person; we were too young.”

- Romans 8:28 (God was sovereign even when you made a bad choice so you can grow in dependence upon God in your sanctification with your spouse)
- Even if married in unwise way, commit yourself to make this marriage work.
- “Owe it to myself to be happy”
 - But our main goal is to glorify God even in difficult situations.
- “God will just forgive me.”
 - But we are not to take advantage of God’s grace.

Romans 6:1-2

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Application

First priority and focus is preservation and commitment to the marriage.

- Divorce is not to be the back-door option where one can rationalize oneself towards.
- God’s grace is more powerful and amazing than you think. By God’s grace, Biblical counsel is available in difficult situations.

If been in a divorce or affected by divorce, you are not a second-class citizen.

- God has fully adopted you in Christ.

If you have divorced unBiblically, ask forgiveness of your former spouse and children.

- Focus on your current marriage to be Christ-like.

If you are not married, be very thoughtful of who you are going to marry.

- Always do pre-marital counseling (at least 6-8 sessions).
- Consider pre-engagement counseling (at least 1-2 sessions).