



What About Divorce?

Genesis 2:24: (NKJV) *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*



As Christians, we all have a sense of the sanctity of marriage. We all know that it is supposed to be ‘til death do us part, yet we also experience about as high a rate of divorce as the rest of our society. Does Jesus give us solid guidelines for marriage and divorce? Should Christians be involved in “no fault” divorces? Do you really have to stay married even if you are not happy? Stay with us as we look into this difficult, sensitive and very relevant matter!

On this program we will discuss a very high standard intended towards Christians. That is not to say the principles are not good for everyone else. If you are a Christian and espouse the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, then these principles apply to you.

Let's set the basis for getting our minds right about the whole marriage arrangement:

Genesis 2:21-24: (KJV) ²¹And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; ²²And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. ²³And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Why did God take a rib? Perhaps because it is close to the man's heart and is protected by his arms. It shows a closeness by which a husband and wife should be operating.

God invented this relationship of marriage with at least two purposes: 1) companionship and 2) procreation. In the marriage arrangement God invented, the children are protected by a mother and a father. Children are educated as they are nurtured and grow.

 **Divorce reasons changed, *The Impact of Divorce on Children*, Tamara D. Afifi, TED talk**

- *Divorce is common. It's less stigmatized. So, why would the differences between children of divorced and non-divorced families be increasing? One of Palamato's (a sociologist and mentor of the speaker) suggestions was: well, maybe it's because the reasons for divorce are different than they used to be. When people got divorced in the 1970's, it's because it's a really bad marriage, right? You know, adultery, all these other things, and they really needed to get out of it. Today people are getting divorced for personal happiness and that could really bother children, right? That's not enough. People are getting divorced too easily.*



Marriage is the highest and most sacred relationship that God ever gave to man.



It is so valuable and so sacred, that God saw fit to seal this relationship with a covenant made in His presence:

Matthew 19:6: (KJV) *So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*


What is God's opinion on divorce?

The following text refers to the sons of Judah, specifically the priests abandoning their Hebrew wives in favor of other foreign and idolatrous women:

Malachi 2:11-16: (ASV) ¹¹*Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel... for Judah hath profaned the holiness of Jehovah which he loveth, and hath married the daughter of a foreign god...* ¹³*And this again ye do: ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, neither receiveth it with good will at your hand.* ¹⁴*Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because Jehovah hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.* ¹⁵*And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.* ¹⁶*For I hate putting away (Revised Standard Version: "I hate divorce."), saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith Jehovah of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit that ye deal not treacherously.*

It is very important as Christians that when we read through the Scriptures, we try to get God's mind on things. We are told that God's ways are higher than our ways, so we have to struggle a bit, but God has a reason for everything He does. The closer we get to His attitude, the more we will understand what those reasons are.

From Good Parenting Institute, found on letsloop.com. Ryan Harris is a life coach...

 **Set an example, Coping With the Emotional Impact of Marriage, Ryan Harris (life coach), Good Parenting Institute, letsloop.com**

- *So, the first thing is, before my ex-wife and I decided to get a divorce, I was grappling with the biggest thing: how is it going to affect our child, (in your case, maybe "children") and the thing that I kept coming back to use as a thing to sort of rely on, I as a father wanted to set a fantastic example for my child.*

Marriage is a "Covenant of God," therefore the marriage covenant has *three* parties involved.



(Source: McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia) **COVENANT OF GOD:** Properly, of a covenant between man and man; i.e. a solemn compact or agreement, either between tribes or nations (1 Samuel 11:1; Joshua 9:6,15), or between individuals (Genesis 21:44), by which each party bound himself to fulfill certain conditions, and was assured of receiving certain advantages. In making such a covenant God was solemnly invoked as witness (Genesis 31:50), whence the expression "a covenant of Jehovah," 1 Samuel 20:8; compare Jeremiah 34:18, 19; Ezekiel 17:19), and an oath was sworn (Genesis 21:31); and accordingly a breach of covenant was regarded as a very heinous sin (Ezekiel 17:12-20).



Theoretically, recognition of God in a marriage arrangement would strengthen that relationship. It should be a factor *against* divorce.

Whenever there is conflict in a marriage - and there inevitably will be disagreements - both the husband and wife should remember God was a witness as part of that covenant. It should allow them to be able to resolve that conflict in a way that pleases Him. God is part of that relationship.



Statistically, however, the Christian nations have as high a divorce rate as everybody else. That tells us something is wrong somewhere!

 **The example, *Coping With the Emotional Impact of Marriage*, Ryan Harris (life coach), Good Parenting Institute, letsloop.com**

- *Then I thought to myself, would I want my son to settle for a relationship that was less than ideal with a partner that was not an appropriate match and just struggle it out because people say you shouldn't get divorced? Or would I set a good example for my son and say, look, you can have whatever you want! Go for it! You can be happy, no matter what. Just go for it and don't settle. So, no disrespect to my ex-wife, of course, she is a fantastic person, one of the best teachers I have ever met. What gave me the courage to finally proceed with the divorce was the idea of I wanted to set, as a man, as a father, I wanted to set as good an example that I could for my son. So, that's a big one. I did not want my son to see me in a relationship that was not ideal.*



What example is it to tell a child that we have to do what is pleasing to *us*? It is the ultimate example of selfishness. This does not match biblical principles. If we are Christians in covenant relationship with God, we have to ask if that kind of thinking appeals to us. If it does, we have to question the basis of our Christianity, which is about something bigger and higher.

The essence of Christianity is sacrifice - giving up your own preferences and comforts so as to do the will of God and be of service to others. That principle works very well in creating a strong marriage bond - giving up what you want so that your partner can have what they want.



How did the Old Testament Law define divorce?

Old Testament definition of divorce:

Deuteronomy 24:1-4: (ASV) *¹When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. ²And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. ³And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; ⁴her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before Jehovah: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.*

Here are five points of clarity on the above text to affirm it is teaching that divorce is a complete *loosing from* and *breaking of* the marriage contract:

1. *He shall write her a bill of divorcement:* He writes the contract, affirming the dissolving of the covenant in writing which shows its legality and permanence.
2. *Give it in her hand:* This phrase is extremely common in the Old Testament and can depict a giving over of power, responsibility and control. The woman having this written document in her hand signifies she, not her former husband, has complete power over her life. She has the legal right in her hand to leave.
3. *Send her out of his house:* The contract has been broken in writing; she has its authority in her own hand and now she is sent out of her house.
4. There is a *former husband* and a *latter husband* - both are considered husbands on an equal basis. After receiving a bill of divorcement, she was permitted to enter into a marriage covenant with a second or latter husband.
5. There is potential for defilement and abomination. This sin *could* happen only if the divorced and remarried woman would be, under any circumstances, reunited to the first husband - *may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled*. "Merry go round marriages" were not permitted.

Jeremiah 3:1: (NRSV) *If a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her? Would not such a land be greatly polluted? You have played the whore with many lovers; and would you return to me? Says the LORD.*

In the New Testament, adultery is a key part of divorce. In the Old Testament, adultery and fornication are not mentioned, rather, *an unseemly thing*. They are not mentioned because under the Law the penalty was not simply divorce but a death penalty for such sexual immorality.



Observation Point: Thus far, the Law seems clear: Marriage is sacred. Yet for the hardness of man's imperfect hearts, God in the Old Testament did allow divorce and that allowance was a clearly stated and unequivocal dissolution of the marriage covenant.



Unseemly is used as a reason for divorce. What does this mean?

(Source: Samuele Bacchiocchi, PhD., Andrews University) The Hebrew word *erwath* (generally translated, "indecent" or "uncleanness") is often used to refer to shameful exposure of the human body (Genesis 9:22,23; Exodus 20:26; Lamentations 1:8; Ezekiel 16:36,37). In Deuteronomy 23:13-14, the word is used to describe the failure to cover human excrement. We would conclude, then, that according to Deuteronomy 24:1, divorce was allowed for some kind of shameful act or indecency other than illicit sexual intercourse.



God often allows things that are not necessarily what He wants. There is God's *intentional* will and *permissive* will. God *allows* divorce, but His *intention* for our ideal spirituality would be to have marriage for life. God will tolerate some things and can potentially bless us *in spite of* what we do vs. God blessing what we do because we are following His will.

Two examples of this:

1. Kings in ancient Israel: God did not want Israel to have kings but God permitted it with all of the problems that went along with a king.
2. God's permission of evil in this world: Some people believe that God's permission of evil means He does not care. That is a mistake. Evil is permitted *for a time* and *for a purpose*.



ALWAYS LOOK FOR GOD'S INTENTIONAL WILL AND NOT HIS PERMISSIVE WILL.

We don't want to be a "bottom feeder Christian," getting along with just the bare minimum of what God will tolerate. We are supposed to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Marriage and divorce are subjects of hard-hitting truths to understand.

 **Not a coward, *Coping With the Emotional Impact of Marriage*, Ryan Harris (life coach), Good Parenting Institute, letsloop.com**

- *Now, you can make any relationship ideal through energy, work, proper focus, appreciating the heck out of your partner to make almost any situation turn around. But I felt that this was not the appropriate partner after seven and a half years for me, and I just thought I don't want to set the example of being someone who's cowardly, who settles, who doesn't go for their dreams; I wouldn't want to display that for my son. So, that was the biggest - that's probably number one - not to get divorced, but the thing that helped me feel comfortable with the idea of actually proceeding with the divorce, because I just wanted to be a good role model for my son, and I thought actually proceeding with the divorce was setting a better example than staying in the marriage.*





This is so contrary to Scripture and a good Christian marriage. The audio example has no interest in resolving issues. If you have made a commitment and are so easily willing to walk away from such a commitment, you are a coward! Fight for commitment's sake!

Dependability is another important aspect of this. Pursuing your own selfish goals makes you undependable. What kind of example is that to the child?

So, what did Jesus have to say about divorce?

Matthew 5:27-32: (KJV) ²⁷Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. ²⁹And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Gehenna) ³⁰And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Gehenna) ³¹It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: ³²But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Jesus raised the standard as high as possible! He is telling us not to do the things that will be offensive to God; do not even THINK those things! Assess yourself.

This presents a major change from the Old Testament! He wanted the original standard of ONE MAN + ONE WOMAN = ONE LIFE. There is no reason or legitimate cause for divorce except sexual immorality. That was a big change from the legalistic thinking of the Jews at that time.

Jesus designates his audience and to whom this new standard applies:

Matthew 19:11: (ASV) *But he said unto them, not all men can receive this saying (those outside of the Christian world), but they to whom it is given.*

Jesus wanted the highest quality of disciple, so a high standard was necessary.

A caller suggests: Marriage is by divine design. Jesus and his bride are the model for marriage. Man has a propensity to dilute and corrupt God's beautiful designs and illustrations. Trouble arises when we deviate from God's law.



Statistics, Effects of Divorce on Children, Marriage Resource Center of Miami Valley

- *Statistically, children are profoundly affected. One third of all children are born out of wedlock and thirty-five million children have seen their parents divorce since 1970. They're five times more likely to live in poverty than those in intact homes and three times more apt to be expelled from school and twelve times more likely to be jailed. Nationally only 45 percent of teenagers live with their married mother and father.*

How sad! Godly principles of love, being respectful and doing justice to each other will help us to avoid a lot of this. The more we apply these standards in our lives, the fewer problems we will have.



Did the Apostle's teachings support those of Jesus?

A caller suggests: What about separation? What about in the case of mental or physical abuse?

There are situations that are truly intolerable, such as when a spouse's life is threatened. Situations arise where it is a sad but prudent thing to separate. From a biblical Christian standpoint, if there is no other recourse than separation, separation is not a sin. We would highly recommend a divorce not take place. With separation there is a possibility of reconciliation. Once you have a legal bill of divorcement, you are one step further away from reconciling. Remember, the ideal is that you resolve the conflict.

We are discussing Christian principles. We are not marriage counselors. You must apply the principles in your life as best you can with the help of the Holy Spirit. Make decisions that would be pleasing to God and practical to your spiritual needs.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11: (ASV) ¹⁰*But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband* ¹¹*(but should she **depart <5563>**, let her remain **unmarried <22>**, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband **leave <863>** not his wife.*

The apostle is here addressing the believers and therefore is repeating what Jesus taught about his marriage preservation standard.

Yea not I, but the Lord: Paul made it clear that this was God's direction.

That the wife depart not from her husband/The husband leave not his wife: Don't leave! But if you do, do not remarry. That marriage bond is still intact even though you are not living under the same roof. Remain unmarried or reconcile. There is a high value placed on reconciling the problem.

There are different interpretations of this verse. Some believe this means just separation, others believe it means divorce. At this point, it is irrelevant...the message is simple: Don't walk away from each other; find a way back. Let selfless (agape) love flow.

All of us as Christians are seeking to do the will of God. The reward God has for us, as the Apostle Paul says, is we are going to be judges, kings and priests over the earth, reconciling mankind back to God. It comes back to the experiences we have every day. There is no marriage that does not have some issue. Are we using these experiences to grow in our ability to fix and reconcile problems? This is what will qualify us for blessing mankind in the future.

In this next audio clip, we need to ask, who are we following? Do we follow Christ and the principles of Scripture or do we subscribe to justifying our own actions that are not in accordance with biblical principles?



))) Realize what you don't want, *Coping With the Emotional Impact of Marriage*, Ryan Harris (life coach), Good Parenting Institute, letsloop.com

- *If you're in this marriage situation or a serious relationship situation that is providing grist for the mill to provide you life experiences, and out of that it helps you to clarify exactly what you want. And now that you've decided what you want, you can go after it. But you couldn't have gotten to this point of knowing what you want if you didn't have the marriage to help you focus or decide or realize what you don't want. So, it's extremely valuable - every relationship serves us very, very well. We shouldn't measure the success of a relationship by its longevity. We should measure its success by whether or not it taught us something.*



As a Christian, we want what GOD wants, not what WE want. Part of our covenant relationship is giving up what we want. This advice is completely at odds with the teachings of Christ and the Apostles.

It reminds us of the way Satan approached Eve in the Garden. He talked about what *she* wanted. He was smooth and upbeat but it was the greatest sin ever.

One of the themes of our discussion today is the damage divorce does. The teaching from Scripture is there is no excuse for divorce except immorality. (The marriage is also considered dissolved through the death of one spouse.) The practical matter is there are difficulties. A Christian couple is to try to reconcile. There are times when separation is important. During such a "cooling off period," we should pray to seek what God wants. We want to reflect upon what attracted ourselves to our mate in the first place. We also want to talk - keeping open communication. Don't divorce; reconcile.

))) Everyone has a right to be happy, *Coping With the Emotional Impact of Marriage*, Ryan Harris (life coach), Good Parenting Institute, letsloop.com

- *You know someone outside of your relationship may judge your decision to get a divorce. "Oh that's wrong!" There are all kinds of people who think that divorce is wrong or evil and should be prevented but they don't realize you're doing what you're doing in order to feel happy. That's your justification for it and there's nothing wrong with that. We should all be selfish in the sense that we have to attempt to be happy through whatever means possible. That's what Shakespeare said - and that's one of my favorite quotes - Hamlet said, "To thy own self be true." So, be true to*





yourself. If that means staying in a relationship and trying to make it work - fantastic. If you know clearly that means it's time for a divorce and move on - fantastic. Everyone has the right to be happy and to achieve it through whatever path they think is appropriate for them.



A caller suggests: Jeremiah 42:14,16 In marriage, conflicts arise. They are painful because marriage challenges us. It holds a mirror to our deepest selves. When this happens, we want to run. But the problems reflected in marriage are in our own images. Ecclesiastes 10:10 and 2 Corinthians 4:16

1 Corinthians 7:12-16: (ASV) ¹²But to the rest say I, not the Lord: If any brother hath an unbelieving wife, and she is content to dwell with him, let him not **leave <863>** her. ¹³And the woman that hath an unbelieving husband, and he is content to dwell with her, let her not **leave <863>** her husband. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. ¹⁵Yet if the unbelieving departeth, let him **depart <5563>**, the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us in peace. ¹⁶For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O husband, whether thou shalt save thy wife?

What if one spouse is a believer and the other is not?

Paul is providing his own sanctified advice for those "unequally yoked." Just like with a farm implement, when you have two believers pulling in the same direction under equal yoking, they are going in the same direction. You want a yoke that will keep that vision in front of you.

Paul emphasized the great value of staying together. He was preaching a Christian message to a pagan population where one spouse accepted it and the other did not. It must have been a common thing. *Just because your spouse does not accept the Christian message, it does not relieve you of your marital obligations.* You should stay together, care for that spouse and provide all of the responsibilities of marriage just as though they were believers.

The Apostle Paul did not override what Jesus taught; he added to it to incorporate another scenario on which Jesus did not specifically comment.

ONE OF THE WAYS WE CAN AVOID PROBLEMS IN OUR MARRIAGE IS TO MAKE SURE WE MARRY IN THE LORD.

This will minimize problems coming from that direction.

Is divorce a sin? Not if under circumstances of adultery. What if you already divorced and regret it? There are differences of opinion regarding complications that arise after Christians do what they shouldn't do, i.e., in the case of children and remarriage. At a minimum, you should resolve to stay unmarried and ask for forgiveness.

Christian marriage is a very high and difficult standard.

These next verses accentuate the marriage preservation approach laid out by Jesus and Paul:

1 Corinthians 7:27-28: (ASV) ²⁷Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. ²⁸But shouldest thou marry, thou hast not sinned;



and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh: and I would spare you.

Remarriage is here understood to be acceptable after a proper divorce - no exceptions, no blame, though the second marriage is viewed as a lower (but not wrong) spiritual decision.

1 Corinthians 7:39: (ASV) ³⁹A wife is bound for so long time as her husband liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is free to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

This of course is the ideal - married for life!

Romans 7:1-4: (ASV) ¹Or are ye ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth? ²For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. ³So then if, while the husband liveth, she **be joined <1096>** to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she **be joined <1096>** to another man. ⁴Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should **be joined <1096>** to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.

Be joined: (KJV says *married*) Strongs #1096 - to cause to be ("gen"-erate), i.e. (reflexively) to become (come into being), used with great latitude (literal, figurative, intensive, etc.): used 678 times but translated *married* 3 times and only in these verses.

Actual and only word for **Married/Marry**: Strongs #1060 gmeo (gam-eh'-o); to wed (of either sex): KJV-- marry (a wife). Used 29 times - ALL translated marry/marriage, etc.

Romans 7 is speaking in general terms regarding marriage, for it *is not teaching a lesson on marriage*, it is teaching the lesson of the new relationship between Jesus and the Church in this life, which replaces the old relationship of the Law and the Jew in this life.

The lesson is: You cannot be joined to the Law and to Christ simultaneously.

This same word *joined* is used to describe the relationship of the Church to Jesus in this life. While this is not an official marriage, it is in a sense an espousal.

A side point - for a converted Jew being "dead to the Law" was the acceptable abandoning of a covenant (the converted Jew became dead to it) in favor of a higher covenant.

Matthew 19:3-12: (ASV) (also see Mark 10:1-12) ³And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? ⁴And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? ⁶So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ⁷They say unto him, why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? ⁸He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. ⁹And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery. ¹⁰The disciples say unto him, if the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry. ¹¹But he said unto them, not all men can receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. ¹²For there are eunuchs that



were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs that were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it.

| Situation | As a consecrated Christian.... |
|--|--|
| <i>I am not married but I want to get married</i> | Two options: 1. Get married but "only in the Lord." (Are we glorifying God in our marriage relationship by putting Him first? That will help minimize the difficulties) Why seek a course that creates added problems from the beginning? 2. Don't get married. The Apostle Paul felt this was the highest option. |
| <i>I'm married but my spouse isn't perfect and I can't change him or her!</i> | We need to bring God into the relationship. Try to reconcile issues and NOT TO CREATE issues. If you are not able to resolve your issues, go get help from elders or pastors who can help give appropriate guidance. It is hard to recognize that the problem might lie with our own selves. How can I better love and serve my spouse? How can I be more sacrificial? Assume change in your spouse will not happen, so how can I adjust to it and minimize its affect on me? How can a change in my behavior counteract it? |
| <i>The issues in my marriage have grown to such a point where it is intolerable to be in the same room as the other. Reconciliation has been tried but is not working.</i> | Separation but not remarriage is in order. Still love one another as a brother and sister in Christ. (Jesus tells us to love even our enemies.) Gain appreciation for each other. Preferably do not get a formal divorce even if there is a permanent separation. |
| <i>I divorced for inappropriate reasons.</i> | Based on Scripture, remarriage is not permitted. If you have made that mistake, it is sin but still forgivable like other sins. Once sin is recognized combined with fruits of repentance, we can be assured God will forgive us. God hates divorce. We need to take that to heart. |

Do not divorce. Reconcile and make God the chief pillar of your marriage. Be honest according to what Christianity calls us to and away from. There is a big difference between the way the world looks at these principles and the way a Christian should look at them.

Many marriages would be better if the husband and the wife clearly understood that they are on the same side.
~ Zig Ziglar

**So, what about divorce?
For Jonathan and Rick (and David!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**

**And now even more to think about...
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!**



Regarding Jesus' teachings in Matthew 19:3-12: (ASV) (also see Mark 10:1-12):

- The Pharisees were asking about the question of the Law's interpretation - one of the popular questions of the day. Matthew 19:3 and Mark 10:2 - notice the *for every cause* part of the question, which alludes to the Pharisees' debate of the time.
- Jesus clearly defines God's original intention for marriage: Matthew 19:4-6.
- The Pharisees seeking to justify themselves: Matthew 19:7 shows them defending their loose attitude and demonstrating the hardness of heart that Jesus reminds them of in Matthew 19:8.
- The thought of divorcing one woman to marry another in Matthew 19:9 may be present - doubling the sin.
- The Mark text leaves out *except for fornication* (among other details) and the Matthew text does not repeat it in relation to the woman divorcing - to apply the *except for fornication* portion in all cases would be entirely appropriate, as that is the spirit of Jesus' teaching, verified in Matthew 5:32. To leave it out would make this text contradict itself.



Observation Point: Jesus' teaching is exactly in line with Matthew 5. Here the focal point of the hardness of their hearts is established, whereas in Matthew 5 it was not as relevant due to the general character of the audience (the average person vs. here being the religious leaders).

Next we present our last text of Jesus' teaching parables to a mixed audience with the previous and subsequent focus on the Pharisees.

Previously, he told of the Parable of the Unjust Steward. Then there was the deriding reaction by the Pharisees, and finally Jesus' reaction:

Luke 16:15-18: (KJV) ¹⁵And he said unto them, ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. ¹⁶The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. ¹⁷And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. ¹⁸Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Jesus seems to be using the lesson of marriage in a figurative sense, applying it to the Pharisees. The Pharisees had figuratively been unfaithful to their "spouse," the Law. They followed after Greek and Roman influence and thereby were adulterous in God's sight (Luke 16:15-17). They were serving mammon, not God, and Jesus had said that you cannot serve both.



Covenant: a mutual contract or agreement between two parties, each of which is bound to fulfill certain engagements to the other. In Scripture it is used mostly in an analogical sense to denote certain relations between God and man. (See *Danville Review*, March, 1862.)

The Hebrew word is derived by Gesenius (*Thes. Heb.* p. 237, 238; so First, *Hebr. Handzw.* p. 217) from the root "he cut," and taken to mean primarily "a cutting," with reference to the custom of cutting or dividing animals in two, and passing between the parts in ratifying a covenant (Genesis 15; <243418> Jeremiah 34:18, 19). Hence the expression "to cut a covenant."

The New Testament context and application of divorce:

Much of the Jewish thinking at Jesus' time was greatly influenced by two well-known doctors of the Law. Hillel had been president of the Sanhedrin for 40 years from about BC 30 - AD 10. Shammai was his counterpart. The work of the Talmud itself was begun based on their teachings.

The following commentaries (among others) also have information on Hillel and Shammai: Jaimeson Fausset and Brown, Lightfoot, Gill, International Bible Encyclopedia, Wycliffe, McClintock and Strong's: General information under their names, specific information under "divorce."

(Source: Excerpts quoted from an article by Bob Williams. *This article clearly and easily describes life in Jesus' time and serves as a tool of context.*) About a generation before the time of Jesus, there were two main parties of rabbis: the Shammaites and the Hillelites. Those who followed Shammai were perhaps the conservatives of their day, while those of Hillel were perhaps more liberal. These two groups would meet regularly to engage in great discussions over matters of the Law. One issue that was continually debated was that of marriage and the proper grounds for divorce.

In Deuteronomy 24:1, it says that a man is to give his wife a certificate of divorce if "she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found a matter of indecency in her." The debate of these two groups focused on the meaning of the phrase "a matter of indecency." Shammai and his followers argued that it meant that one could divorce his wife only on the grounds of fornication/adultery. On the other extreme, Hillel divided the words into two parts in order to allow a divorce for either something "indecent" or for any "matter." They therefore allowed a man to divorce his wife for almost any reason: being a poor cook, speaking too loud, or even because someone else was prettier (Mishnah Gittin 9.10). This debate is actually recorded in the Mishnah: "The Party of Shammai say: A man may not divorce his wife unless he finds indecency in her, for it says: "Because he found in her a matter of indecency" (Deut. 24.1). But the Party of Hillel say: [A man may divorce his wife] even if she spoiled the broth, for it says: [any] "matter" (Deut. 24.1)."

Dr. David Instone Brewer (Research Fellow at Tyndale House in Cambridge, England; in *Biblical Divorce and Remarriage*) speaks about the common practice of that day:

The differing interpretations by these two parties would have resulted in two types of divorce. A Hillelite rabbi would validate a divorce on any grounds, but a Shammaite rabbi would require proof of sexual immorality. The minimum procedure for a divorce was for a man to write out a certificate and give it to his wife. However, a divorce certificate was an important legal document, because it established the woman's right to her dowry. Her dowry, which usually consisted of a large proportion of their combined resources, had to be returned to her when she was divorced, unless she had been unfaithful.



The husband had to decide which rabbi to go to for his divorce - a Hillelite or a Shammaite. He could go to a Hillelite who would validate a divorce certificate without requiring a trial or any real grounds for the divorce, or he could submit himself and his wife to a Shammaite trial. If the husband had proof of immorality, he may decide to divorce her on the grounds of adultery. This brought him considerable advantages because his wife could be dismissed without the dowry, which was normally returned to her when she was divorced. However, this course of action was very difficult and it carried a risk.

Relating to marriage and divorce, the prevailing thinking and lifestyle amongst the Jews at the time of Jesus was pitiful. They had entirely lost the meaning and sanctity of the marriage bond and as a result, went about their lives in a state of moral decay and depravity...sound familiar?

Side Point: The following are some *but I say to you* examples, all from **Matthew 5:** *but I say unto you* was not only lifting the Law to a higher standard, but also correcting their MISUSE of the Law.

Matthew 5:21-22: ²¹Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: ²²But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

- Jesus' *but I say unto you* is clear: the Law says killing is wrong, but killing your brother's reputation through slander is also wrong and equally subject to judgment.

Matthew 5:27-28: ²⁷Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

- Jesus' *but I say unto you* is clear: the Law says adultery is wrong, but even *looking lustfully* upon a woman is a grave sin.

Matthew 5:38-39: ³⁸Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: ³⁹But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

- Jesus' *but I say unto you* is clear: the Law says to be just is appropriate, but to be merciful and humble is a higher standard. Exacting justice of the imperfect people around you encourages an improper spirit in your own heart.

By giving a higher standard to the Law, Jesus does not negate the Law. It is still right to not kill, to be just, to not commit adultery, etc., but there are also deeper matters of the heart that Jesus is addressing.

All of the above point to a higher standard. Jesus' discussion on remarriage here is along the exact same line - to protect the sanctity of marriage - to wake up his audience to the God-dishonoring practice of divorce, especially on improper grounds.



The following is the example of Joseph, Mary's husband. While this is not an example of moral decay, it does illustrate the historical perspective just discussed:

Matthew 1:18-19: (Rotherham) ¹⁸Now the birth, of Jesus Christ, was, thus: His mother Mary having been betrothed to Joseph, —before they came together, she was found with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Moreover, Joseph her husband, being, righteous, and yet unwilling to expose her, —intended, privately, to divorce her.

Joseph knows four things:

1. Mary is pregnant;
2. He is NOT the father;
3. Mary has a sterling character; and
4. Their espousal has been (apparently) broken.

Joseph here follows after the most compassionate understanding of the Law for a clearly justifiable reason, even according to Jesus' words to be spoken later - the quiet and private dissolving of their espousal (in those days divorce was the necessary element for freedom from the contract even though the actual marriage hadn't taken place). There was no need to make an example - no need to prove anything and keep a dowry - no need to be justified in the sight of men. Just follow the Law.

Joseph followed the Hillel approach to divorce, even though he had grounds to follow the Shammai approach which simply shows us that these schools of thought were not only in existence, but used, even by a righteous man such as Joseph...

The Jews of that time were worldly. They had fallen into all manner of compromise with their lives and their degraded value placed on the sacred covenant of marriage was no exception...



Observation Point: The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were involved in regular discussions about marriage, divorce and remarriage. This created an environment of confusion and lax attitudes on the issue, just as there was confusion on so many other issues of the Law.

A more detailed look at 1 Corinthians 7:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11: (ASV) ¹⁰But unto the married I give charge, yea not I, but the Lord, That the wife **depart <5563>** not from her husband ¹¹(but should she depart, let her remain **unmarried <22> and <1062>**, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband **leave <863>** not his wife

But to the married: The apostle is here addressing the believers and therefore is repeating what Jesus taught about his marriage preservation standard.

Depart: Strongs #5563 chorizo (kho-rid'-zo); to place room between, i.e. part; reflexively, to go away

KJV--depart, put asunder, separate. 1) to separate, divide, part, put asunder, to separate one's self from, to depart 1a) to leave a husband or wife 1a) of divorce 1b) to depart, go away

Unmarried: Strongs #22 agamos (ag'-am-os) and #1062; unmarried **KJV--unmarried.** 1) Unmarried, unwedded, single and even used of women



Leave: Strongs #863 *aphiemi* (af-ee'-ay-mee); from 575 and *hiemi* (to send; an intens. form of *eimi*, to go); to send forth, in various applications (as follow):

KJV-- cry, forgive, forsake, lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up. 1) to send away 1a) to bid going away or depart 1a1) of a husband divorcing his wife 1b) to send forth, yield up, to expire 1c) to let go, let alone, let be

Whether or not one believes the separation in these verses is divorce or simply separation, the object lesson is clear: These verses refer to Christian couples and the message is to reconcile! **This was the primary thrust of Jesus teachings - DO NOT DIVORCE! Adultery is giving to a third party what should be given to the original covenanted partner.** To "move on" would cancel such opportunity.

Interestingly, The Apostle does *not* mention the possibility of appropriate divorce and remarriage here - why? *Jesus' earlier teachings focused on keeping marriage intact, so the Apostle is following Jesus' lead.* Jesus had already clarified divorce based on fornication as the only appropriate release from marriage, yet he did not dwell on that release but rather focused on his followers' responsibility to preserve their covenant by continually reminding them of the disaster of fornication looming, should they compromise the standard.