

Wil Owens

The Divorce Question is Asking the Wrong Question; Matt 19:1-9

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Introduction – I don't know of any pastor who enjoys preaching a sermon on divorce. In the same way, I don't know of any church member or attender who would say I'm really looking forward to hearing a sermon on divorce. Divorce is such a common, easily accessible, widely accepted practice today, that we have all been touched by it in some way. Some of us here today have personally experienced it. Most people who have been divorced would rather forget it. It's ugly. It's brutal. It's messy. It's hurtful and damaging and embarrassing. Some divorcees have compared it to death because it rips apart the two becoming one in marriage as in a similar way death separates the marital union.

If you personally have not experienced it, you probably know someone who has. Maybe a family member. Maybe a close friend. Everyone agrees it's not a good thing, it is to be avoided if possible. So I want each of you to hear me clearly today. My purpose in preaching this message today is not to bury you under a load of guilt or cause any further pain or harm. My purpose is that we might hear what the Bible says about divorce, yield our lives, marriages and future marriages to God, and therefore avoid going through the horrible experience of divorce.

Our society, though, attempts in every way to make it commonplace and normal. That's no surprise though, the world always seeks to normalize what the Bible condemns or calls sin. We've made divorce far too easy with no fault divorce and we have gutted the meaning and purpose of marriage. The world has come up with two solutions for marriage. The first solution is to live together and engage in premarital relations before marriage. The rationale of course being you need to find out if you are compatible before you marry. But we know that's not the solution for believers. The Bible calls this fornication. It is a form of sexual immorality just as adultery or homosexuality are forms of sexual immorality. The Bible calls on us to give our lives to Christ as husbands and wives, in everything, and its in the learning to be compatible that God grows us and teaches us and changes us into His likeness.

The second solution the world offers is what are called starter marriages. Just as you have starter homes and you move into a larger home later, so you have

starter marriages. You learn about marriage in the first one and you take those lessons into the second marriage. The second marriage is the one you are preparing for. Of course the problems with this worldly view of marriage are numerous. Not only are you setting yourself up for divorce from the beginning, not only have you missed the biblical picture of marriage completely, but now you are expecting to eventually involve yourself in adultery.

No matter what other plans we devise on how to view marriage or divorce, when we depart from Scripture, we are setting ourselves up to go down the road of sin and reap the consequences that sin produces.

I don't marry couples who are living together or engaging in premarital relations by the way. The reason is that we shouldn't ask God to bless our rebellion. God doesn't bless our rebellion; He corrects our rebellion. He allows us to live with the consequences of preferring our way above His way.

I remember counseling a couple who were living together and attending the church where I pastored. The first subject we discussed was salvation. What does it mean to know Christ and follow Him. The second subject we discussed was entering into marriage God's way instead of our way. So I counseled them to separate from one another for 3 months and commit to maintaining their purity during this time. Then we could come together on their wedding day and celebrate and enjoy God's blessings on a union built to honor the Lord. The young lady was all for it. That's usually the case. Listen ladies, if your fiancé truly loves the Lord, he'll want to treat you with respect as a daughter of God. If he won't honor you before marriage, he won't after marriage either. The young man didn't like this counsel at all. Oh, you don't understand pastor. I love her too much. I can't be apart from her for three months. I told him, if he would give the next three months to the Lord, the Lord would give him a lifelong, wonderful marriage. After much prayer and more counsel, he finally agreed. I married them over 15 years ago. They still have a wonderful marriage and a beautiful family today. So all that to say this: Let's learn how to view marriage and divorce God's way and then we will enjoy God's blessings.

- I. Note the Context of the Question (vv1-3)
 - a. Jesus is going around Judea healing sickness and large crowds are following Him. They see His miraculous power and so they begin to

believe and follow His message of salvation in Him. And the Pharisees couldn't stand the popularity Christ was gaining nor the message He was proclaiming. So they pose this question to Him, not seeking truth to live by but rather to trap Him in some inconsistency with their religious rules.

- b. As it appears, divorce has always been a hot button issue. So they ask, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"
 - c. Let's turn to Deut 24:1.
 - i. The conservative interpretation of that word "indecency" was infidelity after engagement or impurity before marriage. IN other words, if the husband discovered his wife was not a virgin, and supposedly she had led him to believe she was, then he could divorce her. Remember in this context the engagement period was considered part of the marriage. That's why Matt 1:19 says that Joseph, when he thought Mary had been unfaithful to him during their engagement, would have been just in quietly divorcing her. That was the conservative interpretation.
 - ii. However, the liberal interpretation of the word "indecency" could mean just about anything. In fact, it went so far of course as to approve of divorce if the husband did not like the wife's cooking. In other words, no fault divorce is nothing new.
 - d. It seems this liberal view was a fairly popular view at the time. The Pharisees were probably thinking, "if we can get Him to speak against this view of divorce, He'll lose half His following because more than likely a large number of them had been touched by this kind of divorce." The gospels tell us many women followed Jesus and they surely suffered under this practice of divorce.
 - e. So it was staged as a trap. But you can't trap God. Jesus answers the secondary question of divorce by teaching on the primary question of marriage. In other words, if you're asking about divorce first, you're asking the wrong question. Gain a godly view of marriage first and then you'll have a godly view of divorce.
- II. Embrace God's View of Marriage and You Will Eliminate Divorce (vv4-6)
- a. V4 – If you want to know God's purpose, go back to creation. That's where you can best discern God's will. Go to the beginning.

- i. BTW – we could settle a lot of issues and bring great clarity to a confused culture if we would just go back to the beginning and embrace God’s view. Note – the Creator made them male and female. We are created by a Creator – that settles the abortion debate. God made us male and female – that settles the gender debate. Biological sex and gender are the same thing. Gender is not fluid. It is binary. We wouldn’t have to debate today about biological boys competing in girls sports if we would embrace God’s good design and purpose.
- b. Jesus is teaching the very same thing about divorce by pointing us to God’s good design and purpose for marriage. V5 – “Therefore” Gen 1.27. After God created Eve from part of Adam, brought Eve to Adam in the first wedding, God’s intention for marriage was summed up in these words – a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.
 - i. A man and a woman
 - ii. Man holds fast to his wife
 1. How do you hold fast? Eph 5 – you love your wife as Christ loves the church. Whatever Christ would do for His Bride, you do for your wife. Whatever He wouldn’t dare do to His people, you don’t dare do to your wife.
 2. You are to spiritually lead her and sacrificially love her.
 3. BTW – you can’t hold fast to your wife and look at pornography. Ladies, the opposite is also true. If you present yourself on social media as provocative or unclothed, you won’t attract a godly man who means to hold fast to you. You only attract men who mean to take from you.
 4. You can’t hold fast to your wife by pressuring her to be sexually active before marriage. If you don’t put God first before marriage, you won’t put Him first in marriage. How does Christ treat His Bride? Does He labor in love to make her pure and holy or to satisfy His own appetites?
 5. In marriage, we hold fast to one another as Christ holds fast to us.
 - iii. Two shall become one flesh