

11. Marriage - God's basic institution

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According to the survey done by the Barna Group in September 9th, 2004, the likelihood of married adults getting divorced is identical among born again Christians and those who are not born again. The study also found that most Americans reject the notion that divorce is a sin.

Just like an atom is the basic unit in the physical realm, the marriage between one man and one woman is the basic unit of the society we live in. Our God wants us to cherish that marriage, our enemy satan wants to think it as a thing that gets in our way to our physical freedom and pleasure. Satan's methodical strategy is working very well nowadays. From every sitcom in TV programs to advertisements, they challenge the sanctity of marriage and try to portray father of a family as a nothing more than a fumbling idiot, mother can do everything without her husband just fine and the kids get their ways no matter what and treat their parents like they don't know what they are doing.

I am finding out from the cases of marital counselings, many people those who want divorce expect me to give them a green light, so that they can proceed with their divorce. Somehow they think that divorce is easier than making that marriage work. They forget that when they jump off the marriage because of the baggage they have to carry, they still have the same baggage with them after the divorce. That baggage is themselves. Divorce is not an answer and it is a sin except a few exception and God hates it.

This morning we are going to learn what God thinks about marriage and divorce from the lips of Jesus.

A. A TRICK QUESTION ABOUT DIVORCE

Mark 10:1-2 Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. 2 The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him.

Jesus completed His ministry in Galilee, left Capernaum, and came to the Trans-Jordan area, still on His way to the city of Jerusalem. This district was ruled by Herod Antipas, which may explain why the Pharisees tried to trap Him by asking a question about divorce. After all, John the Baptist had been slain because he preached against Herod's adulterous marriage with former sister-in-law who became his wife.

If Jesus answered 'No' to their question, it would not only make Him contradict Moses, but it would bring Him into conflict with Herod. On the other hand, if He said 'Yes' to their question, they could accuse Him of being a heretic in His teaching. So now notice His method. He countered with a question.

Mark 10:3-4 And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her."

By giving this commandment to Israel, God was not putting His approval on divorce or even encouraging it. Rather, He was seeking to restrain it and make it more difficult for men to dismiss their wives. He put sufficient regulations around divorce so that the wives would not become victims of their husbands' ungodly decisions.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, 2 when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, 4 then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

In that day there were two conflicting views on divorce, and which view you espoused depended on how you interpreted the phrase some uncleanness in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

The followers of Rabbi Hillel were quite lenient in their interpretation and permitted a man to divorce his wife for any reason, even the burning of his food. But the school of Rabbi Shimmai was much more strict and taught that the critical words some uncleanness referred only to premarital sin. If a newly married husband discovered that his wife was not a virgin, then he could put her away.

Before we go any further, I have to make this clear to you. Divorce is a sin, but divorced people can be forgiven. And I think that under certain circumstances divorced people can be remarried from the Scriptural viewpoint. I don't know why we will forgive a murderer but often refuse to forgive a divorced person. We act almost as if he has committed the unpardonable sin. People who are saved after they have gone through a divorce ought not to bear the stigma any more than any other sinner who has been saved. We are all sinners saved by grace. It just happens that divorce is their sin.

B. BACK TO BASICS

Mark 10:5-9 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. 6 But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Our Lord Jesus goes back to that which is fundamental. He turns it from a discussion of divorce to a discussion of marriage.

The Lord then took them back beyond Moses to the record of the original Creation in Genesis chapter 1. After all, in the beginning, it was God who established marriage and He has the right to make the rules. According to Scripture, marriage is between a man and a woman, not two men or two women.

I don't care how the lawmakers of the State of Massachusetts define the marriage. God's truth overrides any men's laws and any liberals' opinions. The same sex marriage is wrong and it is unbiblical and it is a damnable concept and it is from the pit of hell.

The problem with many Christian marriages today is we tend to read each other's mail. Has your spouse ever read your mail? "What's this letter here? A bill from some department store!" I'm sure you don't like people to read your mail.

Well, many times husbands and wives read each other's mail from Scripture. The husband reads the wife's mail, and says, "The Bible says you're supposed to submit to me!" The wife replies, "Well the Bible says to 'love me, just as Christ loves the church!'" Husbands and wives, why don't you concentrate on doing your part first?

Husbands, if you will really love your wife as Christ loved the church, your wife – in most cases – will eventually read her own mail and follow God's will. She will submit, because what you say will not come from how loud you yell. It will come from how much you love her and sacrifice for her. True headship comes from sacrifice and love. It thrives when a husband says; "I care about you. I want to help you." Your wife will respect you for that.

Wives, if you will truly submit to your husband as unto the Lord, your husband – in most cases – will love you to the point that he will sacrifice his desires for yours. He will exalt you, putting you and your needs before his own. You will have – in most cases – a husband who loves you as his own body.

Forget that some do-do heads' comment about marriage: "Marriage is 50-50." That is why a half of the marriage in the U.S. falling apart. Each spouse expects the other person do something good for them first. It is anything but 50-50. It is 100-0. You do everything first without expecting anything back from the other person. That is God's intended way for our marriage.

If we want our marriages not only to survive but thrive, we must get back to God's original design.

The relationship between husband and wife is sacred and permanent. It is the most intimate union in the human race, because the two become one flesh.

While the spiritual element is vitally important in marriage, the emphasis here is that marriage is a physical union – the two become one flesh, not one spirit. Since marriage is a physical union, only a physical cause can break it – either death or marital unfaithfulness, nothing else.

A divorce may be legal according to our laws and not be right in the eyes of God. He expects married people to practice commitment to each other and to remain true to each other. Too many people view divorce as "an easy way out," and do not take seriously their vows of commitment to each other and to the Lord.

The bond between a husband and wife should be even stronger than the bond between parent and child. The marriage bond should be stronger than the blood-bond.

This brings the topic of child discipline in the mixed family. In mixed families, the children are already angry with their parents' divorce. The last thing they have in mind is being disciplined by this new parent. Here are a few tips for you:

- Never argue in front of children. They will use it to try to separate you two.
- You two must be in agreement in child discipline, otherwise you will have a major problem down the road.
- The biological parent of the child must administer the discipline to the child.
- Last, but not the least, you must put your spouse before your children in priority.

C. A RUDE AWAKENING

Mark 10:10-12 In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. 11 So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

This is the strongest statement against divorce that is found in the Scripture. The Mosaic system took care of the unfaithful wife or husband. They were stoned to death according to Deuteronomy 22:22–24. Now today we don't stone them to death. If we did, there would be so many rock piles we wouldn't be able to get around them, especially around the areas where Hollywood actors and actresses live.

Some of you might have gone through a divorce after you got saved even though you did not have a biblical ground and married to someone else. All of sudden, this statement hits you in the heart. Now what are you going to do? Should you divorce your current spouse to make it right? Here is an answer for you from the Lord. If you repent what you have done and ask God for His forgiveness for your sin of adultery, you will be forgiven. Make your current marriage work and remain faithful to your spouse and to the Word of God. God will bless you and your marriage.

But if you think that you have not committed sin in your opinion against God's Word, guess who is right? It's God, not you.

One more thing, if you are thinking about going through a divorce without a proper biblical ground, you are facing many problems with those who are around you and from God. If you have children from your marriage, please don't think that your children will get over the difficulties of divorce soon. You are going to make a lasting scar in their hearts.

By now, some of you feel like you've been beaten up. I am not condemning you. You might had a complete jerk as a husband who had treated horribly or a wife who had caused you so much grief. Since you didn't know better, you went through a divorce, somehow you thought it would be better after a divorce. You can start it right with God again by simply come to Him and ask Him to cleanse you with His Son Jesus' blood. He will not remember your sin anymore. Even though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow.

D. BEING CHILDLIKE, NOT CHILDISH

Mark 10:13-16 Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.

It was customary for parents to bring their children to the rabbis for a blessing, and so it was reasonable that they would bring the little ones to Jesus.

Why would the disciples rebuke the people and try to keep the children away from Jesus? They probably thought they were doing Him a favor by helping Him protect His time and conserve His strength.

But our Lord Jesus actually became indignant as He openly rebuked His disciples for standing in the way. Then He announced that the children were better kingdom examples than were the adults. We tell the children to behave like adults, but Jesus tells the adults to model themselves after the children. How interesting!

In what ways are children a pattern? In their humble dependence on others, their receptivity, their acceptance of themselves and their position in life.

Actually, it is rather very simple to believe what God says in the Bible. We, grown-ups, make it complicated with our own limited and puny intelligence. But for the children, they simply believe.

God wants us to be childlike in believing in Him, but not acting childish!

I asked you to underline v14. Some people take this as a scriptural reference against some churches that don't allow young children to come into their sanctuary. Actually, the way they understand this verse is incorrect if you follow this in context.

This is where our Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita stands:

I don't have a problem children staying with their parents in the sanctuary. But since they usually have short attention span and it is difficult to endure 30-40 minutes sermons. By all means, let them attend one of our Kids' Chapel classes, so that they can learn about Jesus at their understanding level.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Obeying God's Word does not limit us in coming to church and reading the Bible. It goes into our daily lives including marriage.

2) God wants us to be childlike in believing in Him, but not acting childish!