

75. Til death do us part

April 30, 2017

It has been said that marriage is a three ring circus – engagement ring, wedding ring, and suffering. 19th century Russian author Leo Tolstoy said, “What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how compatible you are, but how you deal with incompatibility.” There is a lot of wisdom in that.

The Jewish religious leaders who were against Jesus had already tried to ensnare Him with questions about the Sabbath and signs, and they had failed. They tried again, this time with a most controversial issue – divorce.

This subject is still both important and controversial today. Divorce is such an epidemic in our country right now. One out of every 1.8 marriages ends up in divorce court. That is a 55% rate. According to George Barna’s survey, Christian marriages are not much better than the divorce rate of the world. Someone has commented that couples “are married for better or for worse, but not for long.” We need to learn what our Lord Jesus said about this subject from the Bible, the Absolute Truth, and the Final Authority.

A. NO DIVORCE

Matthew 19:1-6 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. 2 And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. 3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” 4 And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ 5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

While they were asking Jesus about the grounds for divorce, Jesus answered them with the biblical principle of marriage. While their hearts were looking for an easy way out, Jesus was teaching them how to stay at it.

It is the same in the eternal security of salvation. Many silly Christians want to know and argue about what constitutes losing one’s salvation. I say that is the most stupid question that any Christian would ask. Why do we want to know how far we can walk away from God? The question should be how close I can be with Jesus. Then we don’t have to know whether we can lose our salvation or not, right?

God ordained marriage as the strongest bond in all human relationships. Four things we must understand about marriage are:

1) It is a divinely appointed union.

God instituted marriage and therefore only God can control its laws.

Genesis 2:18 And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

2) It is a physical union.

The man and woman become “one flesh.” While it is important that a husband and wife be of one mind and heart, the basic union in marriage is physical.

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

That means a husband and a wife leaves their parents and they cleave to one another in the physical, emotional, and spiritual sense. So, don't run to mommy and daddy each time there is a problem in your marriage.

I don't know if you heard this: The marriage between Adam and Eve was the best, because Adam didn't have to hear what Eve's last boyfriend did better him, nor did Eve have to hear how much better Adam's mom cooking was than Eve's.

3) It is a permanent union.

God's original law knows nothing of "trial marriages." God's law requires that the husband and wife enter into marriage without reservations. A divorce should not be seen as an option when things are hard. Marriage is like a mirror, it reflects what we put into it. If a couple has the idea of divorce in their mind as a convenient option, divorce will be much more likely to happen. Ask Britney Spears and Kim Kardashian, they will tell you.

We heard very rich people have pre-nuptial agreements before their marriage. What that means, "When we divorce, I get to keep what I brought into this marriage and whatever I earned." From the beginning, they are walking into marriage with divorce in mind. Wrong, very wrong!

4) It is a union between one man and one woman.

God did not create "Group marriages," nor "gay marriages." They are against the will of God. Anyone condones or encourages these kinds of marriages are against God's principles regardless of culture, civilization, and the century.

I asked you to underline "*Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.*" I don't believe that people in general, whether they are Christians or not, are taking this seriously. What they often forget is that they made their vows in the presence of God and the witnesses. When they go against this vow other than a few biblical exceptions, they become liars.

B. EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

Matthew 19:7-9 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" 8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Jesus pointed out that Moses never commanded divorce, he only permitted it in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Like many people in this modern world, these Pharisees were not interested in discovering truth. They only were interested in defending themselves and what they believed. God's original idea was that married couples would not divorce.

Divorce is never commanded, but permitted by God in certain circumstances, and God permits it because of the hardness of human hearts. Sometimes the heart of the offending party is hard, and they will not do what must be done to reconcile the relationship. Sometimes the heart of the offended party is hard, and they refuse to reconcile and get past the offense even with there is genuine repentance.

What are those exceptions? Jesus said, "*sexual immorality.*" A Greek word for this is "porneia" where we get the word 'pornography.' Sexual immorality mentioned here has a rather broad definition:

1 Corinthians 7:10-16 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. 11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. 12 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. 16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

- 1) **Adultery** – Sexual relationship outside of marriage
- 2) **Fornication** – Sexual relationship before marriage
- 3) **Homosexuality, bestiality, and prostitution**
- 4) **A spouse who gets into habitual pornography without any repentance for time after time.**

Because in God's eyes, the person already committed adulteries in one's heart without repentance.

- 5) **An unbelieving spouse who wants a divorce.**

You may ask, "What about the husband who beats up his wife? Can she divorce that jerk?" No, she doesn't have a biblical ground to divorce him, but she needs to call the police for domestic violence and separate from him for the sake of herself and her children's safety.

If anyone of you men beats your wife, I tell you to stop in the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. In my opinion, anyone who beats his wife is not a real man. As a matter of fact, I call you a coward and wimp without an apology. Because you know that she cannot fight back physically. If you are looking for a sparring partner who can actually whack you, come see me. I will take you on.

C. DIVORCE IS NOT AN EASY WAY OUT

Malachi 2:14-16 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. 15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 16 "For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

Surrendering is not an option if you plan to win a war or succeed in a marriage. I firmly agree with a San Francisco attorney whom I heard say, "There are two processes that must never be started prematurely: embalming and divorce."

I believe that divorce can be more traumatic than death. Because death has closure, it's over. With divorce, it's never over. When divorce happens between the husband and wife, in most cases, it becomes a bitter major battle between them. Because they feel betrayal from their own spouse. By human instinct, they would do everything possible to hurt and to irritate each other.

Somehow, people think that it would be easier and better to divorce and start it over with someone else. They don't realize that divorce will be extremely messy. A typical idea of theirs is "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence." You are right, especially around a cesspool.

You may come up with a few excuses, such as:

1) I don't love that person anymore. – Here is God's answer for you, "Stop that excuse. Love that person as I have loved you." If you love God, you will do what He says. What He says should override what you want.

2) That person irritates me. – Have you ever thought you might irritate that person, too?

3) We started our relationship wrong.

Such as, they had sex before their marriage, or they committed adultery while they were spouses of someone else. Yes, it was wrong for them to do that. But God honors the current marriage, even though it started with an adulterous relationship. The wrong start of the marriage does not give anyone the biblical ground to divorce the current marriage. It is nothing more than an excuse to bail out.

As a believer in Christ Jesus, if you say you love God, then you must do what God says. Stay in the marriage. Your love for that person will return, if you choose to love that person, because the true love is based on commitment, not just a feeling. It is you who chooses not to love.

Marriage is not to find that perfect one for yourself, but becoming a perfect for your spouse till death do you part.

If you divorced your previous spouse and now you are married to your godly spouse, stay at it. God's blessing is upon you. Learn from the mistakes you've made before and make your marriage better, according to God's principle for marriage.

D. THE CHURCH NEEDS TO APOLOGIZE

The church in general must repent from treating some divorcees in the wrong ways. It is not unusual to see the victim of divorce get victimized again by the married people in the church, because the congregation treats her or him like a second class citizen. If you've been hurt by any church, on behalf of the church, I apologize. You are welcomed here in our fellowship.

E. REGARDING CELIBACY

Matthew 19:10-12 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: 12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

Some people do not marry because they were born with no sex drive. Others do not marry because they were castrated. Still others forgo marriage for the sake of serving God. Some have been given the spiritual gift of celibacy from God in order to do this according to 1 Corinthians 7:7. This should not be done by church rules and regulations like Catholics.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) Instead of thinking that divorce is better than living in marriage, look for ways to improve your marriage together from the Word.

You might say, "We tried. It doesn't work." Try harder. You might say, "I no longer love this person." If you meant that, you are sinning against God.

2) If you've divorced without the biblical reasons we talked about, I urge you to return to your spouse or remain pure and unmarried until your ex-spouse get married to someone else or gets involved with someone sexually. Then you have a biblical ground to remarry and you have God's blessing in your life.

3) If you are single, after your divorce, wait upon God.

He will bring just the right person to you. Just don't jump into a relationship without biblical guidelines and without His permission from the Word.

4) Before we judge others for their material problems, let's check ours.