

Message #26

I Corinthians 7:10-11

If you want to see the theological sparks fly, get with a group of Bible-believing Christians and bring up the subject of “divorce.”

The subject of “divorce” was a subject that was addressed time and time again in the Scriptures. It was a subject discussed by Moses, Ezra, Jeremiah, Jesus, and by Paul. There have always been two extremes on this subject, neither of which are right or biblical. One extreme says no divorce for any reason and the other extreme says quick divorce for any reason. These are two extremes we must avoid if we are to have an accurate view of the Word of God. In the Corinthian church you had a variety of people. Some had never married, some were presently married, and some had been previously married. As we come to these verses, Paul is interested in discussing the subject of divorce as it relates to those believers who are presently married.

CHRISTIAN COUPLES WHO ARE PRESENTLY MARRIED HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED BY GOD NOT TO GET A DIVORCE AND SHOULD THERE EVER BE A SEPARATION, THERE SHOULD BE A RECONCILIATION TO THE CHRISTIAN SPOUSE RATHER THAN REMARriage TO ANOTHER.

POINT #1 – God’s ideal is that Christian married couples obey God’s instructions. **7:10a**

As Paul begins this section, the first point he wanted to stress was that when it comes to the subject of married believers divorcing, he IS NOT appealing to his own views and opinions, but to God’s instruction found in His Word. In other words, Paul IS NOT giving new revelation; he IS giving further insight into revelation God has already given.

Category #1 - The instruction of God found in the O.T.

(Fact #1) - God created marriage. Gen. 1:26-28; 2:23-24; Mark 10:6-9

1. It was a union of a male and female. Gen. 1:27
2. It was a union of one male and one female. Mark 10:8
3. It was a union made by God’s will, not man’s will. Gen. 2:18
4. It was a union God promised to bless. Gen. 2:28
5. It was a union that superseded all other earthly relationships. Gen. 2:24
6. It was a union to be enjoyed physically. Gen. 2:24-25
7. It was a union to be blessed physically. Gen. 2:28

(Fact #2) - God permitted divorce. Deut. 24:1-4

God, having to deal with sinful people, IS NOT an abstract idealist; He is a concrete realist. God knew there would be times and situations in which two sinful people would not measure up to His ideal, so He allowed the matter of divorce to be part of His law.

From this passage in Deuteronomy, it is very clear that a primary concern of God is that once a divorce has occurred, if the divorced person remarries and then that new mate either divorces or dies, the mate may not be remarried to the first mate from whom she was divorced.

Some argue that the word “indecency” means that divorce is only permissible if there has been sexual immorality. However, according to Deut. 22:20-21, if sexual immorality occurred before marriage or according to Deut. 22:22, if sexual immorality occurred after marriage the death penalty was to be given. The word “indecency” then must refer to something dishonorable other than sexual immorality.

(Fact #3) - God commanded divorce. Ezra 10:3, 10-12, 18-19, 44

God’s law demanded that no Israelite marry a foreign woman (Deut. 7:1-4). When many of Israel’s men, including some from the priesthood (10:18, 23), married foreign women (10:2), God, through Ezra, commanded that these men divorce their wives (10:10-12). By the way, there is no evidence that those in the priesthood who were involved in this were disqualified from their leadership.

(Fact #4) - God is a divorced God. Jer. 3:1, 6-8

The reason you and I have a relationship with God today is because He has divorced Himself from Israel and has married a new bride called the Church. If it weren’t for God’s “bill of divorce,” you and I would not have ANY relationship with God.

(Fact #5) - God hates a certain type of divorce. Malachi 2:16 (11-16)

There are many types of things which God hates. For example, the Lord hates pride, lying and wickedness and one who causes problems among brothers (Prov. 6:16-19). In the context of Malachi, some of the Israelite men had divorced their godly Jewish wives and married foreign idolatrous women who actually worshipped false “gods” (Mal. 2:11, 14-15). God absolutely detested the thought of divorcing a godly woman who worshipped Him to marry a godless woman who worshipped idols. In fact, He hated this act. It is noteworthy to see that even in this instance, the thing He hates is the divorce, not the person.

Category #2 - The instruction of God found in the N.T.

In the N.T. we get some further information on the subject of divorce from Jesus Christ and, of course, from the Apostle Paul.

There are primarily two major N.T. passages in which this subject is discussed by our Lord:
1) Matt. 5:31-32 and 2) Matt. 19:3-12.

(Fact #1) - Divorce is a possibility. Matt. 5:31

The context of Matt. 5:31 is that of Phariseeism (Matt. 5:20). The Pharisees would not admit they were sinners in need of a Savior, so Christ is presenting a series of issues that makes one guilty in God's sight, one of which would be divorce.

It is no coincidence that the subject of divorce occurs in the context of looking at and lusting after a woman (Matt. 5:28). It is this very thing that can lead to a divorce.

(Fact #2) - Divorce is permissible. Matt. 5:32a; 19:9

According to Jesus Christ, divorce is permissible and legitimate in cases of sexual immorality. Sexual immorality, according to our Lord, releases a person from accountability in the sin of divorce.

(Fact #3) - Divorce and remarriage may constitute adultery. 5:32b; 19:9; Luke 16:18

The only time adultery is not committed would be if the divorce occurred because of sexual immorality. In such a case, the offended party is free to marry and not under any accountability or obligation to God. Can adultery be forgiven? The answer is found in I Cor. 6:9-11: yes!

(Fact #4) - Marriage is created and ordained by God. Matt. 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9

The N.T. places the same sanctity on marriage as the O.T.

(Fact #5) - Marriage ends in divorce because of a hard heart. Matt. 19:8

When a divorce occurs, someone has a heart that is hardened against God, His Word and His will.

(Fact #6) - Remarriage after divorce is necessary for some. Matt. 19:10-12

Not everyone has a gift of being able to remain single after they have been divorced. Therefore for some, remarriage is a necessity and a legitimate need.

POINT #2 – God's ideal is that married believers NOT divorce. **7:10b, 11b**

The words "leave" and "send away" are words that refer to a divorce. It is not right in the sight of God for a believing wife to leave her believing husband, and it is not right in the sight of God for a believing husband to send away his believing wife.

POINT #3 – God’s ideal if they do divorce is that they remain single. **7:11a**

Why? Unless the separation is due to sexual immorality, a remarriage constitutes adultery and certainly neither God nor Paul would promote adultery for a child of God.

POINT #4 – God’s ideal if they do divorce is that they be reconciled. **7:11b**

Obviously, if two Christians divorce and remarry, reconciliation becomes an impossibility and, of course, is forbidden in the Law of God (Deut. 24:2-4).

Have you lost joy, communication and intimacy with Jesus Christ? If we keep our relationship with Him in order, most likely we will discover our marriage will remain in order.