
Subject: More on divorce...

Posted by [william](#) on Wed, 01 Feb 2006 05:12:59 GMT

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Divorce?

Is it the ultimate evil? If you've experienced a divorce are you treated as a second class citizen in God's Kingdom? Should you endeavor to go back to your first spouse if the bond of marriage has been broken and you find yourself married a second time? Is this God's best?

There isn't any doubt that God intended for marriage to be permanent, just as there isn't any doubt that He created mankind with the promise of everlasting life. However, there was one problem...the fall. Man was plunged into sin and with the entrance of sin into the world improvisation became the order of the day. Our lives are surrounded by evil and while it would be nice not to need to make decisions based upon our imperfect circumstances, it nevertheless can't be done.

The wife who is faced with an abusive home situation (and must consider not only her own safety but the safety of the children), women who are living in fear of STD's because of the indiscretions of their adulterous husbands, desertion of a spouse. All of these things are facts of life in a fallen world, and to ignore them and not offer godly council to those who find themselves in such situations is certainly not the way of love. The Church, in my opinion, has neglected these areas far too long, choosing instead an attitude that ignores reality. To say that divorce is never an option, is clearly out of line with the Biblical record. In some cases divorce may be the center of God's will for an individual.

For example, in the time of Ezra it became mandatory for the children of Israel to divorce their wives to show that they were truly repentant for their sins. Divorce was expected, not just a forsaking, but a divorce according to the law, complete with a certificate of divorce.

Of course the reason for divorce here was because they had been forbidden to marry outside of the Hebrew nation and had ignored God's prohibition. The point is, however, they were now expected to divorce the wives that they had taken.

God expects us to deal with less than ideal situations with less than ideal solutions. Ideally, no solution would be needed if we weren't in a fallen world, but given the fact that we do live in a sin-stricken world sometimes "divorce" (a less than ideal solution) becomes the solution that is most in line with God's will... the best solution, under the circumstances.

Let me state clearly, I believe that divorce is one of the most devastating of the human experience, but we need to admit that it is only *one* of the most devastating. Finding out about

an unfaithful spouse, or finding yourself on the receiving end of a physical beating are just as devastating and in some cases can be more devastating.

God's provision for divorce in Deut. 24 is an example of a "less than ideal solution" for a "less than ideal situation". This doesn't mean that it is the only solution or even that it is the best solution, but it is one solution, given the circumstances. God takes no pleasure in divorce any more than He took pleasure when a person was stoned to death for their sins. He was the one who commanded that stoning (a less than ideal solution) be applied under certain (less than ideal) circumstances. Jesus could say the same thing about stoning for adultery that He said concerning divorce-- from the beginning it was not so... God created them male and female, yet because of the hardness of your hearts... adulterers should be stoned.

Divorce has become a rampant scourge in our society, so much so that the other relevant issues about the home and family are clouded. Mention divorce and an immediate opposition to the idea is felt. Sometimes no attempt is made to understand the reason why the divorce is being sought. Divorce is the end result of a long process and not the main problem. So many times in the Church we wait until the last moment--when divorce is mentioned, and then jump in proclaiming that divorce is not of God and must be avoided to stay within the confines of His will.

Because divorce is breaking up our society we focus on this as the problem without acknowledging that it is a mere symptom and the end result of a long process of decline. A process of decline that shouldn't be occurring in the Church.

Divorce should never be an option for two Christians who are walking with the Lord. When one of the two believers sins against the other by committing fornication divorce becomes an option, obviously, the sinning individual is no longer walking with the Lord.

Divorce is also an option for a Christian and an unbeliever *under certain circumstances* and divorce is an option between two unbelievers *under certain circumstances*.

The language of Deuteronomy 24 is vague and I'm convinced that this played a part in the confusion that prevailed in the Pharisee's minds. "Some uncleanness" is given as proper cause for divorce. There is no clarification about what the "uncleanness" includes and opinions differ widely. However, it seems that men were divorcing their wives for *any* reason before the clause in Deuteronomy was given, which would, quite naturally, result in untold hardship for the divorced wife and cast suspicion upon her reputation and character. She had no recourse in the matter-- her life could be effectively ruined. When God gave the Deut. 24 clause, it actually helped the women who found themselves "put away". It helped them by giving them a certificate that stated the reasons she was divorced. She could then become another's wife without a cloud of suspicion that would have followed her before this law.

People misinterpret the divorce clause because they don't understand why it was given. They see

the divorce clause as suddenly opening up the flood- gates and think that things would have been much better without God allowing it. This is simply not true. The divorce clause helped to stem the tide of an out-of-control situation. It was a great improvement given the circumstances.

The Law *limited* divorce to certain specific categories, and gave the women a legal document that dispelled vicious rumors. Without it, the putting away of women would have continued to escalate out of control. The certificate of divorce actually put some controls in an out-of-control situation. It not only served to help women in difficult circumstances, it showed the seriousness of the marriage contract and that marriage couldn't be walked in and out of at the whim of the moment. Husbands would need to show valid reasons for the divorce and be forced to recognize their actions as permanent--He couldn't remarry her if she became another man's wife. It was over. He had no further control in the situation. In my opinion Deut 24 was one of the first victories for women's rights and showed God's love and concern for women.

Ezra 9 & 10 shows that even when God's people had disobediently married foreign wives the men were expected to divorce these wives in a proper manner by giving them a certificate of divorce.

In NT times Jesus clarified why the divorce clause in Deut 24 had been given and made it clear that fornication was the only valid reason for divorce. (Mt. 5 & 19)

There has been a trend to try and interpret the "exception clause" given by Jesus as applicable only to those Jews during the "betrothal period" and didn't include the period after the marriage had been consummated. Matthew, the only gospel that records this particular clause, was ostensibly only writing to Jews who understood His meaning and that after the consummation of the marriage nothing could sever the union except death.

This teaching says that Jesus used the term "fornication" instead of the term "adultery" because the couple weren't actually in a married state until the consummation. However, this view neglects one serious flaw that dooms the argument-- Jesus goes on to use the term "adultery" when referring to the attempted re-marriage of the divorced spouse. If Jesus had only been referring to the betrothal period He wouldn't have used the term adultery, which refers only to an act that a married person can commit. Thus, His own language demands that we recognize that this "exception clause" is a valid reason for divorce for any married couple.

To understand why fornication or adultery are given as reasons for divorce we need look only to 1 Cor 6:15-16. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh."

Fornication/adultery severs the one-flesh relationship and unless the couple reconcile and work through this problem (which is the ideal solution, imo) the intimate one-flesh relationship no longer

prevails. In this situation divorce becomes a possibility although many other considerations may enter into the picture that would keep it from being an actuality.

moulder

Subject: Re: More on divorce...

Posted by [Michael The Disciple](#) on Mon, 17 Sep 2007 13:37:28 GMT

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I agree with you. It seems clear enough though that the exception clause has to do with REmarriage. The one who remarries having been divorced BECAUSE OF FORNICATION by the other partner does not commit adultery. Why? Because the other party ALREADY committed adultery by their sin.

Subject: Re: More on divorce...

Posted by [william](#) on Thu, 27 Sep 2007 15:48:10 GMT

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Interesting thoughts brother. Certainly a different perspective. I'll take it further, and offer a "theory" of my own.

If adultery is given as the only exception for divorce, and Jesus says that the sin can be committed without the act, since it is in the heart, one could conclude that most divorces are justified.

Quote:Question: do you think it is within Gods' power to forgive the Christian who sinned, or do they live in sin for the rest of their lives because they were divorced for righteousness sake?

...and can that Christian who sinned, ever remarry?

I'm assuming your question is rhetorical, (if not, I answer yes, no, yes) but it highlights the difficult position that HEF/FA had over this issue. I remember more than one couple who, because of the teaching in this area, concluded that they were not really married to their current spouses and ended up separating over the issue. There wasn't much grace extended to those who didn't take these extreme measures.

Blessings,
William

Subject: Re: More on divorce...

Posted by [Derick N.](#) on Thu, 15 Nov 2007 11:56:20 GMT

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Hombre wrote on Thu, 27 September 2007 12:06..oh no...I've just revealed another hidden sin in my life.

I watched 'Cool Hand Luke'.

(Spoken in a southern drawl)... "Obviously what we have here is a failure to communicate."

Boy it sure was easy to understand the marriage/divorce/remarriage issue when we all "happily married" at FA wasn't it? But this issue caused me more grief than anything else post-FA.

When my wife left me I considered it a great failure before God. I am still hardly over it 20 years later, and wrestle with that demon virtually everyday, even though I re-married, had children and divorced again.

I feel bad for my second wife, as I know I was not as invested in the marriage due to my lingering belief that my first marriage was more sacred, and was somehow still recognized by God.

Oh well, thats probably more detail than you brothers wanted to hear. It would be nice to come on this forum and confess that I am living the sterling life of faith that we were taught, but sadly I cannot. Thank God for grace and forgiveness... believing for healing was much easier than believing that God still loves me after all I have done.

Subject: Re: More on divorce...

Posted by [Derick N.](#) on Thu, 15 Nov 2007 20:18:47 GMT

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Thanks Hombre... you are the man lol.

Very good thoughts that I will read through more than once and try to practice. I should have plugged into a group of believers after she left me, but instead I went into isolation which was probably a mistake. I hit my next marriage on the rebound and the kids came right away.

You are right on with me confusing God's forgiveness with my own... I am convinced we are way harder on ourselves than He is. I think about King David's sinful actions in the case of Uriah the Hittite... not only did David impregnate Bathsheba, but he had her husband killed.

I'm pretty sure I didn't do anything that bad.

Thanks again.
