
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.

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