

Sermon: Divorce and Remarriage

Texts: Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ESV; Mark 10:2-12 ESV;

see par. Matthew 19:3ff ESV, Matthew 5:31-32 ESV; Luke 16:18 ESV

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Introduction: Divorce has touched the life of everyone here in some way or another. Children can be negatively impacted. Not every single-parent family is the result of divorce, but many are. There are other factors.

For decades, the share of U.S. children living with a single parent has been rising, accompanied by a decline in marriage rates and a rise in births outside of marriage. A new Pew Research Center study of 130 countries and territories shows that the U.S. has the world's highest rate of children living in single-parent households.

According to *Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2015*, a report released by the U.S Census Bureau every two years, there are approximately 13.6 million single parents in the United States today, and those parents are responsible for raising 22.4 million children. This number represents approximately 27 percent of children under 21 in the U.S. today.

Let's talk about divorce for a while. Divorce is not a new issue. It is as old of a problem as Moses. **Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ESV** 1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, 2 and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, 4 then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.

There were two main schools of thought on what *indecent* meant:

Shammai a conservative rabbi - expected that the bride would be a virgin and that the bride would always be sexually faithful. Hillel - a liberal believed that indecent was whatever the husband said it was, i.e. divorce was possible for bad cooking or declining looks.

Divorce was also a problem in Jesus' time:

Mark 10:2-12 ESV ² And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." ⁵ And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,[a] ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

¹⁰ And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Footnotes: [a] Mark 10:7 Some manuscripts omit and hold fast to his wife

Divorce continues to be a lingering problem even in today's world. At one time divorce was very rare. The first case of divorce in Illinois was in the mid 1800's and took a vote of state legislature.

"Fifty years ago, parents were apt to have a lot of kids. Nowadays, kids are apt to have a lot of parents." E. Lawson

Recently in the comic strip, RUBES, by Leigh Rubin, there was depicted a scene that wasn't very funny. In view of the increasing divorce rate not only in society in general, but also within the Church, it is a very sad comment on our lack of commitment. The scene in the frame is that of a classroom with the teacher seated at her desk. The title caption of the cartoon is "Susie brings something really unusual to show and tell." Standing in front of the classroom is Susie, and standing next to her is a man and a woman. The balloon caption over Susie's head reads: "These are my two original parents... and they're still married." Submitted by Daniel R. Koehler, Wellspring Assembly of God, Carpentersville, Illinois

Syndicated columnist Michael McManus, Baptist Press release, March, 1995

Also we can read **I Corinthians 7:10-16** regarding Paul's advice on mixed marriages (i.e., believer and unbeliever)

Marriage is also to model love, sacrifice, forgiveness for an unbelieving world. See [Ephesians 5:22ff.](#)

I. The Bible Teaches that God Hates Divorce.

A. The Bible clearly teaches that divorce except for unfaithfulness is a sin.

It is however not the UNFORGIVABLE SIN.

Divorce is a reality outside and INSIDE THE CHURCH.

Much of cultural media portrays a world where every relationship is disposable. Marriages, husbands, wives and even children are treated as throw-aways. Infidelity and illegitimacy, alternative lifestyles are winked at. God help us! The country just finished PRIDE month. Sin is now promoted as something to be proud of.

And for many people, commitment in any kind of a relationship is not doable in long blocks of time today.

B. Divorce affects one's ability to lead.

Not only the family, but also God's church. It is not a question of forgiveness. God can and will forgive. But just because a person is forgiven both by God and man though does not mean that person is elder material or able to serve as deacon.

It is a difficult discussion, but one's marital condition, i.e. being divorced may indeed disqualify a person from being a deacon or elder depending on the cause. Marriage is supposed to portray a picture of how Jesus loves His church. Elders and deacons are both to manage their households well ([I Timothy 3](#)). Many conservative churches also will apply these same standards to the minister even though they do not consider the minister to be an elder.

II. There Are Many Causes of Divorce.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CAUSES FOR DIVORCE? Most marriages fail because there is little investment *before* a crisis comes.

Some causes for marital break-up certainly would include:

Sexual unfaithfulness

Desertion

Immature Behavior

Social Acceptance

Physical or Psychological abuse

Stresses

Communication - During a survey, 100 divorce lawyers were asked the question, "What is the major cause of divorce in American marriages?" All 100 lawyers agreed that a breakdown in marital communication was the leading cause of divorce. Every meaningful relationship requires significant communication. (*Home Life*, Volume 45, Number 10, July 1991, p. 6) IOWAUGSEP91

We need to communicate feelings, dreams and goals. Although not all communication is good. In order to uncover the processes that destroy unions, marital researchers study couples over the course of years, and even decades, and retrace the star-crossed steps of those who have split up back to their wedding day. What they are discovering is unsettling. None of the factors one would guess might predict a couple's durability actually does: not how in love a newlywed couple say they are; how much affection they exchange; how much they fight or what they fight about. In fact, couples who will endure and those who won't look remarkably similar in the early days. Yet when psychologists Cliff Notarius of Catholic University and Howard Markman of the University of Denver studied newlyweds over the first decade of marriage, they found a very subtle but telling difference at the beginning of the relationships.

Among couples who would ultimately stay together, 5 out of every 100 comments made about each other were putdowns. Among couples who would later split, 10 of every 100 comments were insults. That gap magnified over the following decade, until couples heading downhill were flinging five times as many cruel and invalidating comments at each other as happy couples. "Hostile putdowns act as cancerous cells that, if unchecked, erode the relationship over time," says Notarius, who with Markman co-authored the new book *We Can Work It Out*. "In the end, relentless unremitting negativity takes control and the couple can't get through a week without major blowups." U.S. News & World Report, February 21, 1994, p. 67

III. There Are Many Effects of Divorce.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE you might ask?

Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance. It is like a death!

What happens after a divorce is:

1. Shock Stage

2. Adjustment Stage

positive mourning

negative mourning which includes self-pity and guilt

3. Growth Stage

Richard Nixon once said, “Those who hate you don’t win until you hate them back - and that will destroy you.” No matter how badly you have been hurt, REVENGE SOLVES NOTHING. Forgiveness must be practiced to really get on with the kind of life God wants for you.

Who are the casualties in a divorce? There are a lot of people hurt in a divorce not the least of which are the children. Children often become the unwilling weapons of the husband or wife to get back at the spouse.

HERE IS SOME ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO ARE DIVORCED:

1. Don’t try to be both parents to your children

2. Don’t force your children into playing a role of departed parent.

3. Be the parent you are (Don’t try to be a buddy, big brother or big sister)

4. Be honest with your children

5. Don’t put your ex-spouse down in front of the children (destroying other relationships)

6. Don’t make your children undercover agents who report on the other parent’s current activities.

7. The children of divorce need both a mother and a father. Don’t deny them this right if possible.

8. Don't become a "Disneyland Daddy" or a "Magic Mountain Mommy" (i.e., an entertainer). Children need to see the departed parent in a real life setting.
9. Share your dating life and social interests with your children.
10. Help the children keep the good memories of your past marriage alive.
11. Work out a plan to nurture and develop your children together.
12. Try not to disrupt the many areas in your children's lives that offer them safety and security.
13. If a child does not rebound within a year after his parents' divorce - seek professional help.

Before remarriage is considered - one should see what the Bible (God) says.

Remarriage should never be quick, i.e. "on the rebound".

The reasons that caused the divorce should be evaluated

- Pre-marital counseling is a must.

Conclusion: [Malachi 2:13-16 ESV](#) 13 And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14 But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 16 "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

Divorce may be allowed biblically, but it is never commanded. Love and forgiveness is what God desires for his people.

Paul D. Meier in his book “Is Divorce Ever Necessary?” suggests that divorce is never necessary. He says, “When people complain of irreconcilable differences and personalities they are resorting to a “cop-out used by couples who are too proud and too lazy to work out their own hangups. Instead of facing them, they run away by divorcing and remarrying. Then there are four miserable people instead of two.” Maybe an overstatement BUT.....

Some churches condemn people rather than divorce. I think we ought to condemn divorce while allowing for people who make relational mistakes to be given another chance. It is only with God at the center of our relationships that any of them will survive the years. The Bible says that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God – and yet somehow, against all reason, God loves us anyhow. Grace declares that we are still God’s pride and joy.

Paul Tournier wrote about a friend who was obtaining a divorce: I cannot approve of his course of action, because divorce is always disobedience of God. I should be betraying my belief if I were to hide it from him. I know that there is always a solution other than divorce to a marital conflict, if we are really prepared to seek it under God’s guidance. But I know that this disobedience is no worse than slander, the lie, the gesture of pride of which I am guilty every day. The circumstances of our life are different, but the reality of our hearts is the same. If I were in his place, would I act differently from him? I have no idea. At least I know that I should need friends who loved me unreservedly just as I am, with all my weaknesses, and who would trust me without judging me. If he gets his divorce, he will no doubt meet even greater difficulties than those he is in today. He will need my affection all the more, and this is the assurance I must give him.

If you are divorced God still loves you and will forgive you. We love you! There is healing to be found in Jesus.

[1 John 1:8-9 ESV](#) 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.