

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

Session 3:

Divorce and Remarriage pt 3

February 1, 2023

Review

- Questions: “Is divorce a sin? Is remarriage permissible for the Christian? Is divorce ever God’s will?”
- Five NT Passages: Mk 10:2-12, Mt 19:3-12, Mt 5:31-32, Lk 16:18, 1 Cor 7:10-16:

Review (cont.)

- Conclusions:

1. Divorce may be legal but is clearly not God's intention
2. Marriage part of spiritual discipleship (heart, not law)
3. Jesus says Christians are not to divorce, except in matters of unfaithfulness
4. To divorce spouse in order to marry another is no different from adultery in the eyes of God

Remaining Questions

- What about issues not addressed in scripture (i.e. – physical or emotional abuse, “falling out of love” with spouse, sensing God leading individuals in two different directions, spouse deciding to leave without seeking help or being willing to work on relationship, etc.)

Remaining Questions (cont.)

- What about cultural differences from the time scripture was written until now? Would Jesus teach differently about divorce in our culture today?
- How are we to interpret these teachings for our lives today? What are some answers to our initial questions?

Basic Biblical Principles

1. The main concern in all 5 NT passages is to affirm marriage as a permanently binding commitment, man and woman become one (God's normative vision)

Biblical Principles (cont.)

2. At the same time, there are complex differences among these texts on specific points (i.e. – Mark and Paul give equal freedoms and responsibilities to man and woman, Matt. Primarily the man; Matt and Paul offer exception clauses, Mark and Luke do not, etc.)

3. Therefore, it is a terrible mistake to isolate any particular rule about divorce from the wider biblical teaching regarding God's will for marriage.

God's Intention for Marriage

- Genesis story tells us that marriage represents the one-flesh union of man and woman (good aspect of creation)
- Relationship is symbolic of relationship between God and humanity (an unbreakable covenant) and Jesus and the Church in the NT (Ephesians 5:21-33)

God's Intention (cont.)

- For the Christian, we have said that given the above understanding of marriage, divorce is to be avoided in every possible way (incongruous with God's love for us)
- Rules/laws cannot govern matters of the heart; God judges the heart, not simply following the rules

Summary Statements

1. Marriage is aspect of discipleship (God's faithfulness)
2. Divorce is not God's will, though there can be exceptions to this statement (Scripture – (1) unfaithfulness, (2) desire of unbelieving spouse; Add – abusive relationship)

Statements (cont.)

3. Marriage is grounded not in *feelings* of love but in the *practice* of love (nowhere in Nt are *feelings* discussed)
4. There are occasions – as Matthew notes – when one partner so deeply wrongs the other that marriage cannot continue

Statements (cont.)

5. Remarriage after divorce cannot be excluded as a possibility for Christians (some NT texts discourage remarriage, but others leave open possibility – i.e. – Matthew allows husband whose wife was unfaithful to remarry; even Mark and Paul seem to prohibit remarriage for the partner who *initiates* divorce, so innocent party may remarry (reason for certificate))
6. The Church needs to be a place for divorced persons who choose not to remarry to find fellowship and friendships.

Our Responses to Questions

1. "Is divorce a sin?"

-No; the intentions of your heart may be sinful related to divorce, but the statement is too general

If you divorce your spouse to marry another?

If spouse leaves and you are still trying?

Responses (cont.)

2. "Is there ever a situation in which divorce would be God's will?"

-Yes (abuse probably the best example)

-Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly."

Responses (cont.)

3. "Is remarriage an option for the Christian?"

-Yes; God of grace and love would not say to His child, "Sorry, you blew your one chance";

-"If one purpose of marriage is to serve as a sign of God's love in the world, how can we reject the possibility that a second marriage could serve as sign of grace and redemption from brokenness?" – R. Hays

-Bible harshly condemns remarriage when one leaves his/her spouse for another person (adultery)

-Remarriage requires much prayer, discernment, etc.

Closing Thoughts

- Jesus and NT authors are speaking to men who were using the Law to support their own evil intentions
- Jesus condemns the careless *attitude* about marriage and divorce; calls His followers to a much higher standard in their own marital relationships

Closing Thoughts (cont.)

- There are times when divorce is necessary, but for the Christian it is the last option
- Today, Jesus would condemn our flippant attitudes toward marriage and divorce and call us to higher standards than others in our society