

A Word Concerning Divorce (Part 1 of # 8)

Matthew 5: 31-32

As we approach our text this evening I am reminded of the words of Dr. Alan Carr. *“When you preach through books of the Bible one of the great blessings is that, sooner or later, you will preach on every subject imaginable. But, one of the disadvantages is that, sooner or later, you will preach on every subject imaginable.”* This text certainly fits that clear description. However, I made a commitment to the Lord to preach this series on the Sermon on the Mount, and this is next in the text, so we must deal with it. These verses are there and we cannot and should not avoid them. If the truth were told, the failure of marriages in America would be directly linked to the failure of preaching in America.

Let me say as we begin tonight that it is not my intention to single out or condemn any who have faced divorce. Being raised in a Baptist church, I am well aware that folks would be forgiven of a felony quicker than they would for divorce. I know the hurt and devastation that divorce brings to the home. I was raised in a broken home. As we will see, divorce doesn't just affect the married couple; it affects the entire family.

I am sure that if we were to take a poll of those present tonight, we would have varied opinions on divorce. I am not going to share my opinion; I hope to allow God's infallible Word to speak for itself. I do think we would all agree that we have seen an epidemic in regard to the divorce rate. It appears that those numbers are decreasing, but that is only due to the fact that many never get married; they just choose to live together outside of marriage.

Jesus saw the need to address the issue of divorce and since I have been called to preach the whole council of God, I too share that burden. I want to carefully examine the [imperatives](#) our Lord reveals as we consider: [A Word Concerning Divorce](#).

I. The Perception of Divorce (31) – Here Jesus deals with the way men perceived divorce. I want to mention two points of view as we consider the perception of divorce.

A. The View of the World (31) – *It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:* As with several previous statements, Jesus begins by addressing that which they have heard and hold to be true. Jesus lived in a day where divorce was more rampant than it is even in our society. Historians tell us that many Roman men would have between 15 and 20 wives in a life time. The Jews did not divorce at such a rate, but it was commonplace nonetheless. Jesus lived in culture much like the one in which we live, where all that was needed for a divorce was a writing of divorcement.

- Jesus is making reference to [Deut.24: 1-4](#). (Quickly turn there with me and let's consider what that says.) Clearly God had addressed the issue of divorce within the law that He gave to Moses. If one or both parties desired a divorce, the man was to issue a legal document that stated their divorce. As we will see in a moment, this was never God's will and He never encourages divorce.
- Much of what we hear today, and even the perception of the world, is influenced by those verses in [Deut.24](#). If that were all we had, then one might argue that there was absolutely nothing wrong with divorce and it is permissible under any circumstance. But, that isn't all we have. Now let's consider:

B. The View of our Lord (32) – *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.* Jesus reveals that divorce is not readily acceptable; in fact, it is quite limited when viewed in regard to Scripture. Here Jesus reveals that it is permissible in regard to fornication.

- Now I had always been taught that this was reserved for an act of promiscuity prior to the consummation of the marriage. (I do not agree with that entirely. There are men that I love and respect that hold that point of view and I know some of them would not agree with me. I have come to my conclusion based on what God's Word says rather than the opinions of men.) That is certainly one aspect of fornication, but when we consider the true meaning of the word, we discover that it encompasses all manner of sexual immorality. It comes from the Greek word *porneia* from which we get our word pornography. Fornication in the marriage isn't limited to an act that was committed prior to the wedding vows.
- I am not encouraging divorce; it is never commanded, but there are times when it is permissible, and we will deal with that later. With that I want to consider another portion of Scripture that sheds more light on our text verses. Turn with me to [Mark 10: 2-9](#). Here we discover much about God's design for marriage. The Pharisees had come to Jesus questioning Him on whether it was lawful for a man to put away his wife. Jesus responded, *What did Moses command you?* They referred to the verses in [Deut.24: 1-4](#) concerning a bill of divorcement; to which Jesus responded: *For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.*
- Clearly they were looking at all this from the wrong perspective. They were searching for a means to grant divorce and Jesus declared that it was never the intention of God for divorce to be a part of society. It was permitted only due to the hardness of men's hearts. Many today are looking at it from the same point of view. They are seeking for a permissible reason and never consider that God never intended it to be that way.

- I want to mention a couple of things concerning our Lord's view of divorce from these verses in [Mark 10](#). If we are to have a proper perspective of divorce, we must first have a proper perspective of marriage. Notice:

1. God's Plan ([Mark 10:6-7](#)) – **V.6** – **But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.** Jesus is speaking of the creation of Adam and Eve. Adam was created prior to Eve. As God surveyed His creation, He knew that it was not good for Adam to be alone. He too needed a mate as the animals had. God chose to create a wife, a help meet for Adam. [Gen.2:18](#) – **And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.** The phrase **help meet** has the idea of “*a suitable helper and companion, corresponding to, agreeing with, a counterpart, opposite and equal to.*” In His wisdom God designed marriage for men and women. There are three human institutions that God created: the home, government, and the church. The first of these was the home. God designed the family and He will bless those homes who seek Him.

- Jesus further emphasizes God's plan in **V.7** – **For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife.** Marriage consists of two important aspects, leaving and cleaving. Once again He is referring to God's design from the beginning. [Gen.2:23-24](#) – **And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. [24] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.** God's design was for them to come together in marriage and create the family. They were to **leave** their father and mother, revealing that the relationship with their spouse took priority over any other human relationship. He was to **cleave** unto his wife. This literally has the idea of “*sticking like glue, clinging and joining to.*” It reveals an intentional desire to unite as one. Clearly God designed marriage and the family from the beginning; this was all within His divine plan for humanity.

2. God's Purpose ([Mark 10: 8-9](#)) – **And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. [9] What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.** Once again Jesus is making reference to God's original plan revealed in Genesis with the first of creation. As you can see, God is very clear in regard to His will for marriage. When a man and woman take their vows before God and unit in marriage, they have become one flesh in His eyes.

- This involves much more than just their physical relationship with each other. They are to be one in heart, spirit, and mind. They are to share the same goals and work together as one for the common good of the family. Married couples no longer have the right to “operate independently.” They are one in the eyes of God.

➤ Jesus also makes a very profound statement here: **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.** That means exactly what it says and implies just what one would assume. When a couple stands before God and recites their vows one to another, they enter a covenant with themselves and with the God of heaven. They are not married by the authority of the minister or magistrate, but by the authority of God. He has joined them together as husband and wife, and no man, not even themselves have the right to break that covenant. Simply, God intends one man for one woman, for one lifetime. God chose marriage and one flesh while men choose divorce and many marriages. (For this reason, I choose not to perform marriages where divorce is an issue. Explain my stand.)

- Sadly too often today, marriages are viewed as temporary and entered into with that line of thought. Many assume that if this one doesn't work out, I can always try again. This was never the plan of God. He never encourages or commands divorce. Reconciliation is always to be sought rather than divorce. When we consider it biblically, we discover that is what the Bible teaches.

- We will stop there for this evening. I feel as if we have considered enough for one sitting. In closing let me reemphasize the fact that it is not my intention to single out or condemn those who have faced divorce. Divorce is always the result of sin, and with a few exceptions, those who engage in divorce have sinned. However, it is not the unpardonable sin. God doesn't characterize sin as we do. It can be repented of and those involved can enjoy a fruitful spiritual life. If you are in a divorced situation and have sought repentance, you are not living in a continual state of adultery. [1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.](#)

I plan to finish this up in our next study, but here is the invitation. If you have faced divorce allow me to assure you that you are no second rate citizen in the eyes of God. There are a few positions within the church (pastor or deacon) that you are unable to fill, but otherwise you are able to serve the Lord and share the gifts He has blessed you with. If you need to come before the Lord and seek His help or forgiveness, please come.

If you have not been divorced and are thankful for the home God has given you, why not come and give Him praise for that? Maybe you are concerned about the needs of another couple and would like to come and pray for them.

Maybe you are here and have judged others unfairly and need to ask God to forgive you for your unloving attitude. Really that type of sin is just as much sin as divorce. Whatever the need is, this altar is open.