

Destroying Divorce Among Disciples

(This series of lessons was compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources and many teachers over a period of thirty years. The compiler is very grateful for their wisdom.)

What did you promise?

"Do you take her to be your lawful wedded wife, promising before God and these witnesses to be a faithful, loving and devoted husband? Do you vow to provide for her and protect her, to honor her and to love her? Do you promise to remain with her in sickness as well as in health, in adversity as well as in prosperity, for the worse as well as for the better? Do you vow that forsaking all others, you will keep yourself to her and to her only until death shall separate you? With this ring, I thee wed, and all of my earthly goods and love, I thee endow."

Introduction:

- A. Why talk about divorce when what we need is lessons on the Family?
 - 1. In addition to the fact that it was requested, divorce destroys families.
 - 2. We want to destroy divorce among disciples.
- B. Statistically:
 - 1. 1899 - 1 in 17 marriages ended in divorce.
 - 2. 1999 - Nationally, 1 in 2 marriages end in divorce.
 - 3. In the church, 1 in 3 marriages end in divorce. This is unacceptable!

I. WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN FOR MARRIAGE?

- A. It is a divine institution - *Genesis 2:18-24*
 - 1. God made it and rules it just like the Church.
- B. It is monogamous by design - *1Cor. 7:2; Matt. 19:4-6*
 - 1. There would be no venereal diseases, little AIDS and few broken homes if we all lived according to this plan.
- C. It is procreative by nature - *Genesis 1:28*
 - 1. It is designed to satisfy the need in humans for intimate companionship.
 - 2. *Heb. 13:4; 1Cor. 7:3-5*
- D. It is patriarchal in government - *1Cor. 11:3, 8-9*
 - 1. We are all subject to another greater in authority than ourselves and are accountable for our conduct in that role.
- E. It is religious in nature - *Eph. 5:21-32*
- F. It is indissoluble in form
 - 1. *1Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3; Matt. 19:9, 5:32; Luke 16:18*
 - 2. God gives the rule, but just as in every other area of religion, humankind often changes it to suit themselves.
 - 3. Laws given by God governing marriage may at times be painful, but the pain comes not from obeying them, but rather from rebellion against His will. Sin causes pain!
- G. MARRIAGE NOT ONLY IS A COMMITMENT, IT REQUIRES COMMITMENT
 - 1. Total commitment - the marriage will be maintained regardless of disagreement. (Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Committed Marriage*, pg. 41) "I will be with you no matter what happens to us and between us. If you should become blind

tomorrow, I will be there. When we argue and become angry, as we inevitably will, I will work to bring us together. When we seem totally at odds, and neither of us is having our needs fulfilled, I will persist in trying to understand and in trying to restore our relationship. When our marriage seems utterly sterile and going nowhere at all, I will believe that it will work, and I will do my part to make it work. And when all is wonderful, and we are happy, I will rejoice over our life together and continue to strive to keep our relationship growing and strong."

- b. As in salvation, in marriage there is both a divine initiative and a human response.
 - c. *Phil. 4:11-13* - "ALL things"
 - d. We love not only when the other is lovable, but when they are not so lovable.
- 2. Exclusive commitment - Forsake all others and keep yourself to your spouse as long as you both live.
 - a. Redbook survey of 100,000 women - 47% of working wives have had an affair. Statistics even higher for men.
 - b. In this society, we must be strong and purpose not to sin.
 - c. Avoid relationships with anyone in which you will become closer to someone other than to your spouse, whether opposite sex or family, friends, etc. Letting third parties into the confidences of our marital life can begin to undermine the exclusiveness of the marriage.
 - 3. Continuing commitment - not to die away or wax and wane as time passes and circumstances change.
 - a. Changing appearance, finances.
 - b. "I no longer love them." "We fell out of love."
 - c. Grow up! Change your feelings, not your marriage.
 - 4. Growing commitment - Deepens and matures throughout life.
 - a. The Christian is expected by God to grow in all things throughout life - *Eph. 4:13*. Marriage is not an exception.

II. WHAT IS GOD'S RULE FOR MARRIAGE?

- A. "Let not man put asunder." From the beginning!
 - 1. God's original intention? *Gen. 2:24*
 - 2. What we believe about marriage is a reflection of what we believe about God. Can't keep promises.
 - 3. An institution older than ordained governments and the Church of Christ
 - 4. Abusing marriage by adultery was punishable by death - *Leviticus*
 - 5. God hated adulterous nations - *Jer. 5:7-9*
 - 6. Warned Israel that it was the reason he drove out Canaanites.
 - a. *Lev. 18:6-28*
 - 7. He hates divorce - *Mal. 2:13-16*
- B. During the time of Moses:
 - 1. Divorce law given for the first time since creation.
 - 2. Given only to Jews; Gentiles were never permitted to divorce. Gentiles still bound by God's original law.

3. Jewish men were allowed to divorce their wives for four reasons:
(Jewish women were never allowed to divorce.)
 - a. A woman bought as a slave - *Ex. 21:7-11*
 - b. A woman captured in battle - *Deut. 21:10-14*
 - c. A heathen woman, to whom he had not right to be married in the first place - *Ezra & Nehemiah*
 - d. A woman in whom is found uncleanness (spiritual or physical) - *Deut. 24:1-4*.
4. Notice these divorce laws were not given to accommodate a wandering, divorce seeking man, but to protect the wife.
- C. God did not approved, nor designed it that way from the beginning.
 1. *Matt. 19:3-12* - Moses permitted you to divorce your wives.
 2. *Vs 11-12* - If you have to make yourself a eunuch literally in order to be able to keep this law, go get the knife!

III. WHAT IS GOD'S EXCEPTION TO THIS RULE?

- A. Marriage is for life; couples can only be separated honorably by death
 1. *Rom. 7:2-3* - In *Vs 3*, which one is her husband, the one she remarried or the original man?
 2. This certainly isn't the permissive law of Moses, is it?
 3. She is joined to another while she is bound to her husband, that's why she is an adulteress. She may have received a divorce from civil authorities, but she doesn't have one granted by God.
- B. Simply because a man other than the original husband has married the woman does not mean she is his wife in God's sight.
 1. Herod and Herodias - *Mark 6:17-18*
 2. Not lawful? How does it become lawful?
- C. The Samaritan woman was married to a man who was not her husband.
 1. *John 4:17-18* - "The one you have now is not your husband."
- D. The Corinthian brother had his father's wife, his step mother, while his father was still living; they had no right to be married.
 1. *1Cor. 5:1-2; 2Cor. 7:12* - This man was to be cast out, disciplined.
 2. That union was to be dissolved whether or not they:
 - a. Had relatives there who were influential. We aren't told, so it must not be important to God.
 - b. Had married before they became Christians. We aren't told, so it doesn't matter one way or another to God.
 - c. Had any children by that union. The man and woman were guilty & had to repent, God demanded it, whether there were children or not did not change what they had to do to be forgiven.
 - 1) What of couples who have no children? Consistent?
 - 2) What of children from the first marriage? Don't count?
- E. *1Cor. 7:2* - "Let each man have his OWN wife."
 1. You don't avoid fornication by having someone else's husband or wife; you commit it.

2. 7:10-11 - The woman may not consider herself married anymore, but she still has a husband even though she has departed from him.
- F. Marriage can only be broken honorably by death; it is broken dishonorably by a spouse who fornicates; it is broken unscripturally for any other reason.
 1. "But what about (insert any hypothetical situation)?"
 2. The marriage either conforms to God law, or the divorce must be according to God's exception. The Bales, Fuque, Lovelady, or Hailey positions are false doctrine that will send the adherent to perdition.

IV. CONTRASTING GOD'S PLAN WITH POST MODERN MARRIAGE VOWS

- A. "American families are in trouble -- trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of our nation." (Patrick Moynihan, D NY; White House Conference on Children, 1970).
 1. The chairman of the Blytheville School Board asked the Sex Respect people why don't they teach abstinence in their churches.
 2. We have been... we have been teaching the truth for years, but the siren song of Satan that is being taught in the schools, in the news media, and in the entertainment industry is more attractive to children.
 3. I intend to expose the liberal message taught by our culture on the subject of marriage.
 - a. God will not tolerate what civil government endorses.
 - b. Broken homes are not only on the minds of many Americans today, broken homes are a testimony against their souls.
- B. What attitudes have led to the acceptance wholesale divorce in our society?

1. MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE

A. *Rom. 7:2-3*

2. WE ARE FULFILLED BY OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL IN MARRIAGE

A. *Gen. 3; 1Peter 3:1-2, 7; 1Tim. 2:15*

3. SPOUSES ARE TO INFLUENCE EACH OTHER FOR GOOD

A. *Ecc. 4:9-12*

4. ONE CANNOT BEGIN A MARRIAGE WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT IT IS ONLY TEMPORARY

A. *Matt. 19:3-10*

5. GOD'S MARRIAGE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES MUST PREVAIL

A. *Eph. 5:21-25, 28-29*

6. WHO WILL WE PUT FIRST? SECOND?

A. *Eph. 5:25*

7. GOD SAID "TOGETHER"

A. *1Tim. 5:8*

8. ADULTERY IS A SIN UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Heb. 13:4

9. WHO IS NOT ACCOUNTABLE FOR PUTTING DOWN ANOTHER?

A. Matt. 18:6; Rom. 14:10

10. WHAT IS OUR FIRST COMMITMENT?

A. Luke 14:26

11. MARRIED PEOPLE DWELL TOGETHER

A. Ruth 1:16-17; Gen. 2:24

12. GOD'S WILL FOR OUR HOMES DOES NOT CHANGE

A. Heb. 13:8

Conclusion: (Illustration of arranged marriages; they make it work)

A. In a world enamored with sin, we must maintain purity in our homes.

1. We must not give in to the temptation to fornicate.
2. We must never adopt the world's standards for marriage.
3. We must never believe that marriage is anything but a lifetime, permanent commitment.
4. Divorce must be destroyed among disciples.

B. "What God has joined together, let not man separate."

1. Teach your children well.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Variations in Applications or Fellowship with Error?

Introduction:

A. We hear a great deal of furor over the complexity of this issue, including statements from a few of the men at the 2004 Truth Magazine Lectures about accepting multiple conflicting applications of Matthew 19:9.

1. The difficulty is generated, not by what is written in scripture, but by what brethren have written about scripture.
2. The articles and messages I have received over the past four years on this issue number in the thousands.

B. God made His word understandable - Eph. 3:2-4

1. Baptism is immersion for the remission of sins - Acts 22:16; Col. 2:12
 - a. We are inconsistent when we criticize denominationalists for advocating salvation by faith only, and then extend fellowship to brethren who teach divorce by intellectual repudiation only.
2. Necessarily follows that in a matter that greatly impacts morality and salvation as does MDR that God would make Himself especially clear.
3. Baptist woman in AR on Matt. 19:9 - "I guess I am going to hell."

4. Most people understand it as written. It takes a preacher with an agenda and a library of lexicons and denominational scholars and lengthy appeals to history to complicate it.
- C. Purpose for this study
1. Not demanding that you mark men, cancel meetings, ban magazines, or generate division among area congregations.
 2. Teach sound doctrine and expose error in order to inform and arm you. I have no other agenda. You decide what to do with the lesson
- D. Much party spirit over this issue
1. Actually, I work for Jesus Christ, and have never been much of a joiner, so don't waste my time with politics. If you've banded together under any banner but the Lord's, you may rest assured that I'm not in your group. And if that means that I am not trusted, so be it.

I. WHAT IS WRITTEN IN GOD'S WORD?

A. Matt. 19:3-9 - exegete

1. Marriage is a covenanted relationship that consists of:
 - a. Statement or indication of intent or agreement to marry - Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5
 - b. An oath or vow - Gal. 3:15
 - c. Formal ratification - whatever is recognized by contemporary culture as the celebration of a binding covenant
 - 1) Gen. 15:17, 24:22-53, 29:22-27; Jer. 34:18; Matt. 25:1
 - 2) Heb. 9:16-18; Mal. 2:14; 1Sam. 20:8
2. Likewise with divorce:
 - a. Right purpose – fornication
 - b. Right intent – to put him away for fornication
 - c. Right action – whatever is recognized civilly, socially, or culturally as ending a marriage. (It is not relevant whether or not one is successful in court; one is called to action, not results.)
 - d. Example - Joseph and Mary: He was planning to put her away privily. He had what he believed was the right purpose (she was pregnant, implying fornication), the right intent (he wanted to put her away), and the right action (put her away privily implies an action of some sort was expected). He was Divinely prevented from taking this action.
3. In every instruction from God, there are three elements that must be present for the successful keeping of that imperative:
 - a. Right authority - God must be the source
 - b. Right intent - man must purpose to obey by faith
 - c. Right action - man must act on his faith as Divinely instructed
4. Illustrate with baptism - can one intellectually repudiate his sins?
 - a. Apply to MDR - One cannot intellectually keep an instruction that mandates action.

B. Questions

1. "What did Jesus mean by divorce in verse 9?"
 - a. The same thing He meant by it in verse 8, and the same thing the Pharisees meant by it in verses 3 & 7.
2. "Can a person who was put away for no scriptural cause remarry if the mate fornicates or remarries after the divorce?"
 - a. What is Jesus Christ's clearly stated order?
 - 1) Fornication by the guilty mate
 - 2) Divorce by the innocent mate
 - 3) Remarriage by the innocent mate only
3. "What if the guilty mate beats the innocent to the courthouse?"
 - a. In instructions that require the cooperation of other persons for a successful outcome, disciples are required to make the effort.
 - b. God does not condemn one for results outside of the realm of his responsibility - Mark 16:15; Gal. 6:1
 - c. One need not succeed in getting the divorce. He is called to action in such matters, not results.
4. "But isn't the civil divorce and civil remarriage meaningless?"
 - a. Rom. 7:2-3 - The apostle Paul taught that while God does not approve, He still acknowledges the fact that one has divorced and remarried.
 - b. God said, "Let not man put asunder." He did not say, "Man cannot possibly put asunder."
5. "But what if the innocent mate is put away against her will, and she maintains the marriage in her mind? Can she intellectually repudiate him five years later when he remarries and becomes an adulterer?"
 - a. Where is it written? This is a scenario invented by men in violation of God's marriage law.
6. "You are taking away her right to marriage. You are making laws where God did not."
 - a. What is written in God's law -- His avowed understandable law?
 - b. I cannot take away a right God has not granted.

C. Sin causes pain.

1. Victims of theft, drunkenness, assault, or murder deserve happiness, but must live with the consequences of another's sin.
2. I grieve with those good people who have been betrayed by an unscrupulous mate and find themselves in sad circumstances for life.
3. But I will not attempt to relieve their present sorrow by developing a new doctrine on MDR at the expense of their eternal happiness in heaven.