

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.)

"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 in a series of lessons on the Family?
 - 1. 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, man often changes it to suit himself.
 - 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 hurts!
- G. MARRIAGE NOT ONLY IS A COMMITMENT, IT REQUIRES COMMITMENT
 - 1. Total commitment - the marriage will be maintained no matter what.
 - a. (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-happy 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. *Romans 7:2-3*

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

A. *Genesis 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: (Addendum on arranged marriages)

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.