



Divorce
April 04, 2019

Verses Covered

Matthew 19:6 – 9

Deuteronomy 21:10 – 14

Deuteronomy 24:1 – 4

Malachi 2:14 – 15

Matthew 5:31 – 32

1 Corinthians 7:10 – 16

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 16

Man shall leave his father and his mother, hold fast to his wife. The two shall become one flesh. There's what we've talked about. You focus on your wife. She focuses on you.

⁶They're no longer two, but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man separate. ⁷They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" ⁸He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

And then we'll look at this further in Matthew 5.

So He lays out this premise that from the beginning, God never wanted a dissolution of the marriage. Now go to Deuteronomy 21. Let me show you what is said in the Old Testament. And it is interesting. There's kind of a shift that occurs. That even when there's allowance of something, it's interesting because God always protects the woman. Even back here, the hearts are hardened, they're in battle, they conquer, they find a lady that looks good to them, and here's what the Bible says.

¹⁰When you go out to war against your enemies, the Lord your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive ¹¹and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you desire to let her be your wife, ¹²bring her home to your house, you shave her head and

pare her nails. ¹³She shall take off the clothes in which she was captured. She'll remain in your house and lament her father and mother a full month; after that you may go into her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. ¹⁴But if you no longer delight in her, you shall let her go where she wants, but you shall not sell her for money, nor shall you treat her as a slave since you have humiliated her.

So even though there's a basis here, he says, "Look, you capture this woman, you don't like her, you let her go." But God, even in the deep hardness of hearts here in Deuteronomy, he makes sure that the woman is protected. Nothing about you. But she's protected. Then look at Deuteronomy 24:1 – 4. This is the passage Jesus is alluding to the Pharisees.

¹When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, ²and she departs out of his house, if she goes and becomes another man's wife, ³and 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, ⁴then her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife, after she's been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord,

Now it's interesting because his premise is, I think, here that he doesn't want this constant going back and forth inside marriage. Remarry and then remarry and then remarry. He wants a stability of single devotion here. So again, even though he's dealing with a hardness of heart, the woman is protected.

Now slide over to Malachi 2. Look at what the scripture says. If you have trouble finding that, hit Matthew and then the book right before it. It's a pain trying to find those little, tiny prophets. Here's where he says there.

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵Did He not make them one with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what did that one do while he was seeking godly offspring? So guard yourselves in your spirit. Let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. For the man who does not love his wife, but divorces her, says the Lord God of Israel, covers his garment with violence says the Lord of Hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit. Do not be faithless.

So you have this protection of women here. And then you have later on in the Old Testament, last book written, 400 years before Christ, he says, "You can't divorce. You do not divorce your wife. You stay with her. You stay within the covenant with her."

Now I want you to look at two passages with me. Look at Matthew 5 and we'll look at 1 Corinthians 7. Now here's where we're going to struggle. I've heard all my life there are only two reasons to divorce: adultery or abandonment. Now it's a difficult position, but I want you to listen to what Jesus says and listen to it carefully. Because it's interesting the precision with which he says it. Matthew 5:31 – 32. Here's what He says:

³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; ³²but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Now listen carefully to what He says and think it through. If I look at Peggy and there’s nothing wrong with her and I kick her out, He says I have immediately put her, and it’s on me, not on her, I make her commit adultery. I’ve immediately put her in an adulterous position. And then he says, whoever marries her, they’re now in an adulterous position. But the blame for the adulterous position is not on her or on him, it’s on me. I’m responsible for that because I’m the one that pushed her out. So when you read this, you’ll learn a couple things. God’s view of adultery is a disillusion of the marriage. The marriage dissolves. There’s adultery. The definition of adultery is: the marriage is over. Now if I boot her out and she remarries, and in that day there was no pension, she basically, particularly if her family moved her from Syria to Israel, she can’t go home. She has to remarry to live. So His premise is that if she remarries, she is in adultery in the sense that she’s out of the original intent for marriage God had for her, but it’s his fault. And so adultery is really you miss the original intent. And then look at 1 Corinthians 7:10 – 16. Slide over to the right. Here’s what he says.

¹⁰To the married I give this charge, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband. ¹¹(but if she does leave, she should remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. ¹²To the rest, say I, not the Lord, if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consent to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴The unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife made holy because of her husband; otherwise your children be unclean. ¹⁵But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such cases, a brother or sister is not enslaved, God has called you to peace. ¹⁶How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? How do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

These are the two rules generally: sexual failure and abandonment. Now if you take a literal position in the scripture that these are the only two options, you have a great number of problems. Now let me just walk you through what I’m talking about. I’ll give you four illustrations. I’ve shared before. I had a lady in my office years ago who said, and she had two children sleeping in the other room. She said, every night her husband would take a 357-Magnum revolver, empty the cylinder, take a bullet, put it in the cylinder, spin it, cock it, put it up against her head, not pull the trigger, pull it back, de-cock it, pull the bullet out, set it in the drawer. And she was in my office because she said, “I can’t take it. Every night he does that to me.” Her question was to me, “Should I get out of the marriage?” And my answer was unequivocally, “Absolutely you get out of the marriage.” If one night the phone rings, he pulls the trigger, her two little kids are now left with a man that’s virtually, I think practically, insane.

I’ve had women in my office who, Bible says that your body is not yours, your wife’s body is not hers. And so I’ve had women in my office whose husbands have raped them consistently two or

three nights per week. It is true the Bible says your wife's body is not her own. It doesn't mean you take it by force. It's rape. So I have had women in my office who are raped a couple times a week. I've obviously had women in my office who've been beaten. Men are good. They beat women where you can't see. They beat them on the body. They don't ever hit them on the face. Although I have a lady that I know, personally close to, who divorced her husband finally. He had beaten her over a few years. But the last straw for her was when he took her face and he put it through a plate glass window. And the last thing she saw before she went through the plate glass window was her two-year-old son watching. And then I've had more than one woman who's been in my office and said, "My husband is molesting my daughter."

Now should you stay in a marriage where your husband is molesting your daughter? Does it fit these two? No. Would you stay in a marriage where your husband's beating you regularly? No. Doesn't really fit these two. Would you stay in a marriage where your husband rapes you? Doesn't really fit these two. Not violating sexually; he's only raping you. Does it say anything about a 357-Magnum pistol every night? No. So the problem you face with the scripture is, and that's why the Bible's not a rulebook. It does not address every issue. For me, then, these are principles; not rules. And there are two principles that illustrate this issue for me. That in this one, any immorality, now here's my point, I don't think a Christian can choose to divorce. I do think a Christian can be pushed out of a marriage. Any issue that brings immorality and violates the holiness of the home, I think is grounds for divorce. And there are ways to be abandoned without the guy leaving the house. We tend to make it a legal thing. Who filed for divorce. When to me, if a guy's got a 357-Magnum at your head, he's abandoned his role; his proper role in the marriage. And he's abandoned you. When he's raping you, I think there's a very real sense in which he's abandoned you. When he's molesting your daughter, he's abandoned you. So I think these are principles.

Now let me read one other thing. Go to 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 16 because I want to address one thing that I think is nuts.

¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Belial, what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

So he goes off on this thing of you don't marry an unbeliever. Now according to this section of scripture, if you are married to an unbeliever and they want to stay, you have to let them stay. And here's the key principle for me. If you're walking toward Jesus and your spouse is not, you're not going to be happy in the marriage. You can't be. Now you can exist. But if you really walk toward Christ and your husband doesn't, you're going to be unhappy because he's not going to tithe, he's not going to go to church, he's not going to share the Bible with you, he's not going to love you properly. But according to this and according to this, even if you're unhappy then, you can't get out of the marriage. So you can't leave a marriage because you're unhappy. That is not a grounds for divorce. And I'm going to tell you straight. This is my own take. You go to a counselor; it won't be their take. But it's my take. I'm not a big believer in verbal abuse being an option either. When I hear people come in and say is verbal abuse is a lot of times just the normal wear and tear that we have with each other inside marriage. So I'm not buying the verbal abuse.

I'm not buying the unhappiness. What I do think is locked in here is I can't get out of the marriage. I have to be pushed out of the marriage by something my spouse does that violates the holiness of God in a way that it's destroying my home because he's abandoned his position as a husband. And that abandonment of his position is destroying my home, not just making me unhappy. For me, that's where I've had to come to after a number of years with dealing. And I'm not a situational ethicist in any shape. But I just don't think the Bible addresses every possibility for getting out of a marriage. If the Bible were a rulebook, we wouldn't be able to carry it. It's a book of principles. And I think those principles are here. I don't think I can leave and I certainly can't leave because I'm unhappy. I have to be pushed out by something that I think Jesus would argue is OK. I do not think Jesus would ever, for example, expect a wife to stay in a marriage where a husband's molesting a daughter. I just can't go there. So for me, this is where I've come to.

But again, you're a godly husband, you're in the marriage until you die. You don't have an option. I don't care if you're unhappy. I don't care if she spends too much money. I don't care if she yells at you when she has PMS. I don't care about all that stuff. Now I think one other option you have inside here is, if you just want out of the marriage, you can get out. I think divorce is Biblically legal. If you get out of the marriage because you don't like it and you're unhappy, in that case you can't remarry. You have to go back and be reconciled. If you're not reconciled with that one, you can't remarry. You can get out, but Biblically as a Christian, you can't find another lady. So understand that principle. If you do get out, you have to go back. And I have had some men who have left marriages and have said, "I was wrong." And they've gone back to their spouse and renewed a relationship. I've seen that happen. But for me because of all I deal with, this is a position I've come to.

One other thing, I think if you're divorced, is what I would consider Biblically legit, then I think it's legit to remarry. So I think you have to place that in the back side too. And I will say one other thing here. If your divorce is before Christ, then I think none of this applies. If your divorce is before Christ, none of this applies. You're totally free to remarry no matter what you've done before Christ. I think you weren't in a Biblical covenant and I think forgiveness. Now the other side also for me is, I think the ultimate in the New Testament is forgiveness and restoration. But there are certain guidelines here. I think for us, you're a godly man and you've got a godly wife, your marriage is until the day one of you dies. That's pretty clear particularly with this passage. There are obviously some options, but I think you've got to really be careful. I think you have to be pushed out. You don't get to leave by choice.