

## The Permanency of Marriage

### Matthew 19:1-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-15

#### Introduction:

- A. People know nothing about the “covenant” that is made with another in marriage (Malachi 2:14). When it comes to marriage, we have become a society of cheaters and “covenant-breakers.”
- B. Rather than confessing and repenting of this sin, society has opted to accommodate it. We want to make it as easy as possible for people to not keep their word.
1. Contract marriages.
  2. Serial marriages.
  3. View marriage as an outdated institution and throw it out altogether, substituting live-in relationships.
- C. The main response to the sin of “covenant-breaking” in our society is easy divorce.
1. We have become the land of the “no fault” divorce.
  2. The divorce rate peaked at 40% in 1981 and has held there ever since. This means that there are millions of people who have been impacted by divorce.
  3. Further, divorces are now occurring in the second and third generations of the same families. Parents have not shown their children how to solve problems and manage their emotions. They have taught them how to run away from problems through divorce.

- D. Against the background of our cultures low view of the marriage covenant rings Jesus words:

*“Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the*

beginning.” (Matthew 19:8).

1. It was never the plan of God for people to take the sacred marriage covenant lightly. God’s plan is one man for one woman for one lifetime!
2. Since God created the institution of marriage, since He has the divine authority to regulate, and since His creatures have a responsibility to obey His regulations for marriage we had better examine what God says about the permanency of marriage.

#### **I. THE PHARISEES’ QUESTION.** (Matthew 19:3).

A. “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” (Matt. 19:3).

1. Clearly, we are not the only culture of “easy divorce.” The Jewish culture had adopted this, as well.

#### **II. THE BIBLICAL PLAN FOR MARRIAGE.** (Matthew 19:4-6).

A. The reminder of the marriage absolute that God, Himself, created the institution of marriage. (v. 4).

1. Remember the implication of this absolute? Since God is the Creator of marriage, man’s opinions about it are not the issue. Further, man does not have the right to do with marriage as he pleases. God’s design for marriage is to be followed and God’s regulations for marriage are to be obeyed.

B. Jesus explains the implications of this absolute. (vv. 5-6).

1. The goal of marriage is an ever growing oneness between the husband and wife. (v. 5).
2. When the marriage covenant is made, it is God, Himself, Who is sealing these vows. This is such a critical issue that God later tells us that if marriage vows are broken He, himself, will serve as the chief witness against us. (see Malachi 2:14).
3. Since God takes marriage vows seriously, we had better. What God has joined together, man had better not go around separating whenever he feels like it.

4. The Scriptures are clear that God hates divorce. (see Malachi 2:16). Divorce has brought nothing but chaos and pain into society.

### III. WHAT CAUSES DIVORCE? (Matthew 19:7-8).

A. The Pharisees misinterpret the intent of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as being “easy divorce.” (v. 7).

B. Jesus declares that the reason divorces occur is sinful hearts (v. 8). Moses had to regulate divorce in order to clean up the mess and protect the innocent parties.

C. Jesus is saying nothing less than this: Divorce occurs because one or both spouses have hard hearts that refuse to obey God and solve problems God’s way.

1. Let me add here that divorce *can* occur due to ignorance of God’s truth and following the counsel of the ungodly (see Psalm 1:1). People who don’t know God’s Word think that the worldly view of marriage and divorce is normal.

D. Jesus here only allows for divorce in one instance: sexual unfaithfulness on the part of a spouse. (v. 9).

1. It is important to note that divorce is not *commanded* in the case of adultery. It is best to view this exception as reserved for the case where a spouse is a repeated adulterer who simply will not repent of his/her sin. The “adultery” clause is not meant to be a first strike weapon. Many, many marriages have become strong by working through the pain of sexual failure. Facing down and solving problems is always better in the long run.

E. The disciples understood that Jesus was strongly asserting that marriage is to be permanent. (v. 10).

1. They had gotten used to an “easy divorce” climate like we have. Their reaction to Jesus’ teaching is astonishment. “If the marriage covenant is to be this strong, this binding, where you can’t righteously get out of it,

a person would be better off staying single!” That is the reaction of the disciples.

#### **IV. THE PERMANENCY OF MARRIAGE IN 1 CORINTHIANS 7.**

*Commands given to couples where both spouses are saved:*

A. Husbands are wives are not to separate. (1 Cor. 7:10).

1. Separation here refers to divorce. God commands here that this is not to occur.

a. It is important to add that many couples use separating from one another (without filing for divorce) as a “cooling down period” to try and solve their problems. It rarely works. Separation almost always ends in divorce. For this reason, separation should be avoided. Issues need to be faced and resolved.

**Biblical Counseling Training Institute      The Permanency of Marriage**

B. If divorce does occur, they are to remain unmarried or seek to reconcile. (1 Cor. 7:11).

1. When two believers divorce (except for adultery---Matt. 19:9) remarriage is forbidden. Their only option is to reconcile in their own marriage.

*Commands given to couples where only one spouse is saved:*

C. If the unbeliever is willing to continue the marriage, the believer must not divorce him/her. (1 Cor. 7:12-14).

D. If the unbeliever abandons the believer, however, the believer is commanded to “let him/her go.” (1 Cor. 7:15).

1. In the early church, as often happens today, two unbelievers would marry and then one of them would come to faith in Christ, while the other wouldn't. This created a difficult situation (see Matthew 10:34-36).

2. As long as the unbeliever is willing to stay in the marriage, the believer is not to divorce him. Rather, the believer is to seek with the holiness of their own life to be a witness for Christ to him.

3. If the unbeliever wants no further part of the marriage,

however, the believer is commanded in this text to let them go and not fight the divorce. In such a case, the divorced believer is free to remarry, as long as the person they want to marry is another believer (see 1 Cor. 7:39).

**Conclusion:**

A. Divorce is clearly not the plan of God for marriage. God's plan is that married couples be growing together in a beautiful oneness (Genesis 2:24), not splitting apart. Marriage is to be permanent. If you don't have that commitment don't marry!