

- C) The legal documents which report divorce during the time of Christ reveal that when a man or woman divorced, it was assumed they could get re-married without repercussion. This is a primary reason Jesus speaks to this issue.
- D) When Jesus responds to the Pharisees (hostile inquiry) in Mark 10:1-12 and the parallel passage of Matthew 19:3-12, the question is "is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" (Mark 10:2).
- E) In typical fashion, Jesus asks the Pharisees a question in response to their inquiry (Mark 10:3). But Jesus' words cut to the heart of the matter with the Pharisees in two ways.

4) The "Heart" Of Marriage Is Never Found In Divorce

- A) First, Jesus' question reveals a fatal flaw in how the Pharisees approached the Law. They came to God asking "what does the Law allow me to do?" Or, more specifically, "What can I get away with?"
- B) The Pharisees were interested in their rights. They were not interested in their responsibilities, or in a response to God's intentions. They simply wanted legal exoneration for their behaviors, not matter how it affected others.
- C) So secondly, Jesus asks them for Moses' command, knowing full well there was no command, which the Pharisees answer notes (Mark 10:4). This law of Moses was permissive, not imperative. Just because something is permitted does not imply God's approval. Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should.

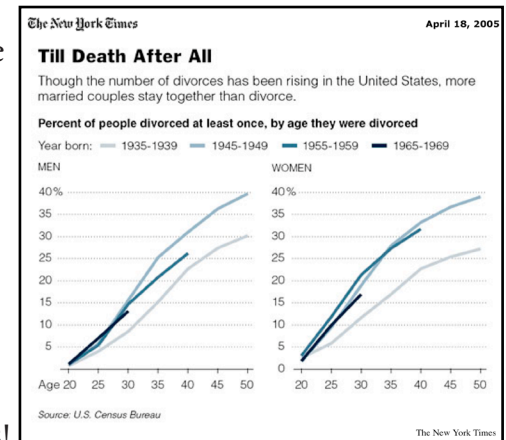
For Better For Worse

Long Beach Alliance Church • May 17th, 2009 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all? ~Matthew 19:3b (NASB)

I) Establishing The Issues & Ground Rules

- A) Is there any question that divorce is a problem in the United States of America? Most of us have been affected by the devastation of divorce in some sort of significant manner. Whether it was your own divorce, that of your parents, a family member, or simply a friend -- divorce is an enormous cultural reality for all of us!



- B) As a recent study (by the New York Times) reports, the divorce rate in the United States of America is a tremendously complex issue, but reveals that 40% of first-time marriages currently end in divorce within the USA.

- C) The Barna Research Group, which studies trends within church culture, has found that “born-again evangelical Christians get divorced at the same national rate as those who are non-Christians and do not attend any church.”
- D) The issue of divorce and the related issue of re-marriage has been an issue for God’s people dating back to Moses (cf. Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Divorce was a “hot issue” during the time of Christ, too (Mark 10:1-12; Matthew 19:3-12).
- E) Even after Christ had been resurrected from the dead and the Spirit came in power upon the earliest church, divorce still remained a big issue (cf. 1st Corinthians 7:10ff).

2) Some Ground Rules For Dialogue & Discussion

- A) Since divorce is such a hot issue within our church and, I would anticipate, some of our lives, I feel it is very important to establish some key “ground rules.”
- B) First, the Word of God is our guiding authority (2nd Timothy 3:16). The Scriptures are our measure, particularly on difficult and/or controversial issues, for direction regarding life and practice (Hebrews 4:12).
- C) Second, the Holy Spirit provides wisdom for individual situations (John 16:6-11). Anyone who feels they have a “unique situation” is probably correct. This is why Jesus provided the unifying Spirit of God (John 14:16-17).
- D) Third, our relationships with each other should be marked with both truth and compassion (Ephesians 4:14-15). The

truth of Scripture, spoken with the wisdom of God’s Spirit, delivered in compassion for the purpose of building up the family of God (Ephesians 4:29).

- E) Fourth, as followers of Christ, it is important to not get overly fixated on one or two selected issues from Scripture. The church is far too well-known for being issue oriented rather than Christ-centered and love-driven (John 13:35).
- F) Fifth, let’s all be honest with one another. There is no one in our church who does not need the grace of God because of personal sin. None of us want to feel like we are being “policed” by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Remember that receiving grace and giving grace are the same thing, one cannot exist without the other (Ephesians 4:31-32).

3) Some Specific Background For Our Discussion

- A) While we have been studying 1st Corinthians together, we will consider all the teaching in the Bible on the subject of divorce in order to arrive at some comprehensive conclusions (Genesis 1:27, 2:24; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:16; Mark 10:1-12; Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-12; & 1st Corinthians 7:10-16).
- B) There were three popular lines of thought during the time of Christ regarding divorce (all of them were explaining Deuteronomy 24:1-4, specifically regarding “indecency”).

The School of Shammai said a man could not divorce his wife unless she was found committing adultery. The School of Hillel said that a man could divorce his wife even if she spoiled his dish. Famed Rabbi Akiba said a man could divorce his wife if he found a better looking woman.