



Hitched:

God's Great Gift?

Till Death?

Matthew 19:1-11 (p 975)

The Challenge:

- It's an issue that impacts all of us personally
- Biblical history spans a few thousand years of varied marriage and divorce practices that are weird to us
- Much of the teaching on marriage and divorce consists of specific cases (case law), not statute law

Exodus 21:10-11 (p 74)

*“If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her **food, clothing and marital rights.** If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.”*

The Commitment:

- Material Support: “food and clothing”
- Physical affection: “marital rights”
- Faithfulness: “You shall not commit adultery” (7th commandment, Ex 20:14)

The Question (v 3):

*“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for **any and every reason?**”*

“any cause”?

| | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| πᾶσαν (pasan) | αἰτίαν; (aitan) |
| “any” (13x) | |
| “every” (6x) | |
| | “cause” (11x) |
| | “reason” (8x) |

Deuteronomy 24:1 (p 194)

*“If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds **something indecent** about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house...”*

Two Rabbinical Schools

Deuteronomy 24:1

“something indecent”

דָּבָר *davar* (word, charge, matter)

עֲרוּת *ervat* (indecentcy/uncleanness)

| | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Hillel | Shammai |
| “any cause” | “some indecentcy” |

*“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife with an **‘any cause’** divorce? Tell us your interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, Jesus: Do you side with Hillel, or Shammai?”*

The Answer (4-6)

God's intention and ideal for marriage has always been and is:

- Monogamy (5)
- For life (6a)

Question 2 (v 7)

“Why did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

Answer (8, 9)

- “Moses did not command but permitted divorce because of hard hearts” (8)
- God is a covenant-keeping God; we should be covenant-keeping people
- God forgives us infinitely (Lk 18:21-35); we should forgive our spouses graciously
- 1 Corinthians 7: believers must do everything possible to reconcile with their spouse

Answer (9)

In other words:

NO “ANY CAUSE” DIVORCE!

NO EASY DIVORCE!

Remarriage after an “easy,” “any cause”
divorce is adultery

As followers of Christ we will have the highest view of marriage possible. We will do everything in our power to keep our marriages healthy. As much as it depends on us, we will be at peace with our spouse. We will invest our best time and efforts and even money into this relationship. We will pray.

We will read books, will attend seminars, we will get counseling, we will get away for weekends... We will do whatever it takes because God created marriage as a life-long covenant between one man and one woman.

And he is a covenant-keeping God and he calls us to keep our covenants.

That's where we start, that's where we focus, just like Jesus.



God's Great Gift?

Is Jesus saying “No divorce”?

- No, he is saying God’s purpose has always been lifelong marriage
- He is saying that “any cause” divorce is prohibited by Deuteronomy 24:1
- He is saying that any one who divorces and remarries **without proper cause**, commits adultery

So When Is Divorce Permissible?

- *(Note: only “permitted because of hard hearts”, but strongly discouraged. Rather forgive/reconcile)*
- *Adultery/ “marital unfaithfulness” (v 9)*
- *Desertion (1 Cor 7:15: “If an unbelieving man or woman leaves, a believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances.”)*

God, who created marriage for life and is a covenant-keeping God, hates divorce. Marriage is sacred and so believers, who have received so much forgiveness in Christ, must extend forgiveness to their spouse and work on reconciling the relationship as much as is in their power. Divorce, then, should be the exception, rather than the rule.

However, because we are fallen people with hard hearts, God reluctantly permits divorce. It is permissible in at least two situations: adultery and desertion. Even in these, forgiveness and restoration is to be encouraged wherever possible.

Broad Biblical Principles

- God's ideal for marriage is that it be one man, one woman loving each other for life

Broad Biblical Principles

- God, who has forgiven us an infinite amount in Christ, calls husbands and wives to extend extreme grace and forgiveness towards each other. This may involve much pain and not insisting on our “rights.”

Broad Biblical Principles

- God recognizes that in a fallen world, self-centered sin and sustained, stubborn hardness of heart can destroy a marriage and so reluctantly permits divorce under certain extreme circumstances

Broad Biblical Principles

- Christ-followers are not to be the hard-hearted ones who kill the marriage and bring about divorce, but are to seek every means possible to rescue the marriage

Broad Biblical Principles

- When every reasonable avenue of forgiveness, reconciliation and change surrounding the extreme offense is exhausted over time, divorce is an option

SO...

- **All marrieds** commit to giving our best efforts to strengthening our marriages
- If you've been an **innocent victim** of divorce (as a spouse/child), ask God for a forgiving heart for the guilty party

SO...

- If you've had an **invalid “any cause” divorce**, confess and receive Christ's forgiveness

SO...

- If you're **considering a divorce:**

- *Remind yourself of God's intent for marriage and the call to dying to self which that involves*

- *Just because you might technically be able to justify a divorce, doesn't mean you should get one*

SO...

- If you're **considering a divorce**:
 - *Recognize the higher standard God calls us to: to forgive and reconcile and work on the marriage*
 - *Don't be the hard hearted "guilty" party who kills the marriage; do everything you can to rescue it*

SO...

- Don't judge divorcees, love them
- Consider Divorce Care
- Thank God that unlike all of us, He is a covenant-keeping God who loves you infinitely and walks with you continually!



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