

Following Jesus
37, The Divorce Dilemma
Matthew 19:3-12

I. Message

a. **The request – v.3**

- i. “3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him (testing or trying to trick him), and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”
- ii. The Pharisees wanted an answer to an age-old question: Does the Law allow a man to divorce his wife for any reason?
 1. This questions probably stems from misunderstanding a passage in Deuteronomy
 2. **Deuteronomy 24:1-2**
 - a. Sin messed everything up!
 - b. So, the Israelite law, by God’s grace, compensated for this
 - c. When sinners say “I do”, problems are sure to follow
 - d. Sometimes the situation becomes unreconcilable because of infidelity
 - e. So, divorce was a gracious concession
 3. At the time of Jesus, this was a raging debate among the Jews
 4. Two schools of thought in Jesus’ day
 - a. Divorce was not allowable under any circumstance except sexual infidelity (that was the uncleanness Moses spoke of)
 - b. Divorce was allowable of anything, including burnt toast! (find no favor meant any grievance was grounds for divorce)
 - c. In the Jew’s eyes, the question was an “unanswerable” one

b. **The “recipe” – v.4-6**

- i. God’s plan was instituted way back in Genesis 2 at the creation of man
 1. **Genesis 2:22-24**
 2. What we learn from this passage:
 - a. Marriage predates sin
 - b. God created 2 genders – male and female / man and woman
 - c. His plan was for one genetic male and one genetic female to leave father and mother
 - d. Stick (cleave) together
 - e. And weave their lives together as one entity (one flesh)
 3. This was not only God’s plan
 - a. This was to be God’s doing – **V. 6**
 - b. He joined them together
 - c. This is why God places such a high priority on “not putting it asunder”

d. Malachi 2:15-16

- e. God hates divorce – it is an outworking of sinful hearts marred by sin and the curse!

c. The root issue – v.7-8

- i. Humans have a long-standing tradition of seeking loopholes in God's commands
- ii. Jesus' response is classic!
 - 1. God did NOT intend it to be this way
 - 2. Moses allowed for divorce only because of the "hardness of their hearts"
 - a. You are asking the wrong question, Pharisees!
 - b. The right question is "**how do we get softer hearts?**"
 - i. **This was the root issue – hard hearts**
 - ii. The hardness of heart in a person that sins against their spouse
 - iii. The hardness of heart in a spouse who refuses to forgive

d. The rules – v.9

- i. Divorce is permitted when the other spouse has been sexually unfaithful
 - 1. Fornication – porneia – any kind of sexual sin
 - 2. For any other reason, divorce encourages adultery
 - 3. Paul adds to what Jesus says (still 100% inspired truth)
 - a. Divorce is allowed if an unbeliever abandons a believer
 - b. **1 Corinthians 7:10-16**
 - c. Divorce is not required, but it is allowed if an unbeliever abandons a believer
- ii. Marrying a wrongfully divorced person encourages adultery
 - a. This is the biggest question for modern Christians
 - b. Divorce happens and MAY be permitted
 - c. But may we remarry?

e. The responses – v.10-12

- i. The human response
 - 1. Let's just not get married!
 - 2. The legal penalties for fornication were severe
 - 3. But the legal penalty for adultery was DEATH!
 - 4. Why risk it?
- ii. The Master's response
 - 1. The truth is: Singleness is not a viable option for most people
 - 2. But for some, singleness IS the best situation

- a. This is not superior to marriage
- b. But it is not an inferior choice
- c. Whatever is best “for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (v.12)

II. Conclusions and applications

a. Application #1 – Elevate Marriage

- i. Marriage is held in high regard all throughout scripture
- ii. Marriage done right is awesome!
- iii. Not only that
 1. Marriage is a picture of Christ’s relationship with the church.
 2. **Ephesians 5:32**

b. Application #2 – Sanctify Sex

- i. It is a beautiful creation of God that is sacred within marriage
- ii. **Hebrews 13:4**

c. Application #3 – Avoid Divorce

- i. Divorce is NEVER required
- ii. Forgiveness and reconciliation should be sought even if divorce would be permissible
- iii. **1 Peter 3:1-2**
- iv. But if you have divorced, remember:
 1. God wants you to have a Christ-honoring life (and marriage)
 2. Even if you’re the guilty party, God is a forgiver, the gospel is forward-thinking

d. Application #4 – Extend Grace

- i. In your marriage
- ii. AND in observation of divorce
 1. Divorce is no more of a sin than your particular issue
 2. Do not judge or despise those that are affected by divorce
 3. Cheer them on as they seek to build a marriage of oneness that honors the Lord!
 4. **Galatians 6:1-2**