

Jesus and Marriage **Matthew 5:31-32**

Marriage is a “divinely ordained relationship or union” (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-24).¹ Marriage is a unique, mystical union where two people become one while maintaining their individuality in existence. Two other mystical unions are in Scripture: the union of the church (we are all one body) and the union with Christ (He is in us and we are in Him).

Jesus discussed marriage in Matthew 19:4-6.

Jesus made four relevant conclusions about marriage:

- (1) between a man and a woman;**
- (2) God designed marriage to be permanent and blessed by Him (v.6);**
- (3) Marriage begins a new family that supercedes the previous family relationship;**
- (4) the two parties in the marriage covenant now view themselves as complements of one another instead of just individuals.**

The **Purpose of Marriage**, according to Barnette, was fourfold.

First, marriage exists so that a man and a woman can have permanent companionship with a member of the opposite sex. The woman was made to be a help meet or companion and helper for the man.

Second, marriage exists for moral procreation and child rearing. The marriage covenant provides the most successful environment for everyone in the family, and especially the children. God told the first couple to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).

Third, marriage was given for moral, undefiled fulfilling sexual activity. Hebrews 13:4 states that “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled.” 1 Corinthians 7:3-4 states that the married couple should not deprive themselves from one another but rather fulfill each other sexually. Marriage provides the context for this activity to take place morally.

Fourth, Marriage guarded husband and wife from immorality. Marriage is viewed as a remedy for sin in 1 Corinthians 7:9: “But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” Also, in verse 2 of the same chapter, the Bible says: “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”

Divorce

God created marriage and intended it to be one man for one woman for one lifetime (Matthew 19:6). God hates divorce (Malachi 3:16). Divorce is never good. Divorce is permitted in two cases in the New Testament. Jesus said that divorce is permitted because of “fornication” (Matthew 5:31, 19:9). Paul stated that divorce was permitted because of abandonment (1 Cor. 7:15). If an unbeliever wants to leave the spouse then the believer is allowed to grant the

¹Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics*, (Nashville, Broadman, 1961), 111.

unbeliever a divorce without guilt and bondage.

The Certificate of Divorce does not dissolve the covenant. Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 teach that a divorce does not necessarily make it moral now to remarry. Romans 7:2-3 uses marriage as an illustration but the text demonstrates that the marriage covenant is only broken when one of the individuals die. First Corinthians 7:39 restates the same truth.

Jesus said that the hardness of your heart is what brought divorce into being the question from the Pharisees was is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

Deut 24:1: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house,”

Other guesses are “some indecency,” “something improper,” “improper behavior,” “something offensive,” “a shameful thing” (LXX), etc. According to Shammai and his followers the reference was to unchastity or adultery.

According to Hillel and his disciples the meaning was far broader. They emphasized the words, “If then she finds no favor in his eyes,” and accordingly would allow divorce for the flimsiest reasons, so that the husband could reject his wife if she accidentally served him food that had been slightly burned, or if at home she talked so loud that the neighbors could hear her. If Jesus endorsed the more strict interpretation, favored by Shammai, he would be displeasing the followers of Hillel.¹

Jesus answered yes - of course it is lawful because the book of Moses

The Bible permits divorce for two reasons: adultery and abandonment

Adultery

Matthew 5:31-32: “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

Abandonment

1 Corinthians 7:13-15: “And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*. But God has called us to peace.

Jesus said that there was more to it than just the legal aspects of it. It is about the heart. Marriage is all about the heart.

Remarriage

Remarriage is addressed differently in the Bible than is divorce. Although, they are similar in the sense that if divorce is granted for two reasons then remarriage would not be allowed if the divorce occurred for any other reason than the two.

Divorce was allowed in two settings: adultery and abandonment. Abuse should lead to separation but not necessarily divorce.

Jesus called remarriage adultery (Luke 16:18, Mark 10:11-12). Paul said the person would be called an adulterer (Romans 7:2-3).

Remarriage is not allowed because (1) the covenant is only broken in death; (2) remarriage is adultery; (3) remarriage prevents the needed reconciliation of the marriage (1 Cor. 7:10-13); (4) remarriage de-emphasizes the initial weightiness of choice to marry someone. If you can marry and divorce without clear biblical grounds, then the marriage covenant will be weakened for everyone

Remarriage, though never allowed when the divorce was for the wrong reasons, may be permitted if divorce occurred for biblical grounds.

God may permit that which He does not like. Jesus stated that Moses gave them a certificate of divorce because of the hardness of their hearts.

God may permit remarriage even if the divorce was for the wrong reason. God may allow remarriage at times when it is the best in the situation for the parties involved.

Paul, on one occasion, commanded the people of God not to get married if they were not married (1 Cor. 7:26-27). The circumstances at Corinth were difficult and war was looming (Paul called it "trouble in the flesh" in verse 28). In another text Paul commands to marry (1 Timothy 5:14). The context and the situation does bear heavily on the marriage decision. God permitted divorce when He hated it. God may permit remarriage although He hates the circumstances that brings it into being.

Paul said it best: **"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife" (1 Cor. 7:10-11).**

One also must remember that marriage provides a moral way to procreate and to have sexual activity with a person. Marriage is always a decision to be moral. Marriage is always good, in that it is moral. Marriage, can be, however, a means to commit adultery. Jesus always condemned this perversion of marriage. Likewise, if you remain unmarried and just live together then the result is devastating to a community and culture. A couple should marry to be moral. Believers, however, who have already been divorced for the wrong reasons should realize that remarriage is adultery and should only be considered in fear and trembling. The writer of Hebrews spoke to the seriousness of adultery when he said: "Marriage is honorable among all

and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Marriage should be revered in a community and certainly in every church family. It should be revered by every believer. Marriage is the foundational building block for the family and the community. Every believer should view marriage as precious and priceless.

Now, what about those who find themselves divorced and remarried today while discovering the truth of God?

Paul stated, “Are you bound to a wife, do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife” (1 Cor. 7:27).

Repent of what you did. Accept God’s complete forgiveness and perfect cleansing. Revere marriage and hold it in incredible esteem because it is best as a once in a lifetime experience. Teach the next generation God’s way.

¹Hendriksen, William ; Kistemaker, Simon J.: New Testament Commentary : Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark. Grand Rapids : Baker Book House, 1953-2001 (New Testament Commentary 10), S. 375