

Jesus Teaches About Divorce and Remarriage

Matthew 19:1-9

by David Servant

God's original intention for marriage is a lifelong commitment, but He has made provision for forgiveness when divorce occurs.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:1, Matthew 19:3-9, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Marriage And Divorce", "Gods Forgiveness"

Description

David Servant delves into the topic of divorce and remarriage, exploring the differing views among religious teachers during Jesus' time and Jesus' teachings on the matter. He emphasizes God's original intention for marriage to be lifelong and undivided, with divorce being a result of human sinfulness. Servant discusses Jesus' stance on divorce, highlighting the seriousness of adultery as the only valid reason for divorce. He also addresses the misconception around Jesus' words on remarriage and adultery, stressing the importance of considering the broader context of God's forgiveness and grace in interpreting these teachings.

Transcript

The religious teachers of Jesus' day were divided over the question of divorce. The Law of Moses spoke about a man finding some "indecency" in his wife and giving her a certificate of divorce (see Deuteronomy 24:1). The question was, what qualified as an "indecency"? Some religious teachers taught that if a man found anything he didn't like about his wife, that was an indecency and he could lawfully divorce her. Others considered that the only indecency over which a man could lawfully divorce his wife was the sin of adultery. The question that the Pharisees posed to Jesus doesn't reveal which group they were in: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for any reason?" (Matthew 19:3).

Jesus first responded by telling them what God had said in the Scriptures. God initially created one man and one woman and joined them together as one. It was His intention that they never be separated, and that is His intention for every marriage. Divorce is not His plan for anyone.

The Pharisees then brought up the issue of the provision for divorce in the Law of Moses. Jesus explained that, because of the people's hard-hearted wickedness, God permitted divorce. He may have meant that because of people's general selfishness, it was inevitable that married people would fight and separate. Again, this was never God's original intention for any marriage, but it inevitably occurs. Therefore, the Law

of Moses had a regulation to govern divorce when it happened, part of that regulation being that the man had to give his wife a certificate so she could prove she was divorced.

Jesus also clearly endorsed the fact that adultery was the only indecency by which a man could lawfully divorce his wife. It's possible that when Jesus said that Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts, He meant that Moses permitted divorce when adultery had been committed because of the hardness of people's hearts. That is, a truly loving husband would forgive an adulterous wife who was repentant. If his heart was soft, he would not divorce her.

But what about Jesus' words, "A man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery"? (Matthew 19:9). It is my opinion that He must have been talking about a married man who falls in love with a woman who is not his wife, quickly finds some small "indecency" in his wife, divorces her, and marries the other woman. He thinks to himself that he has not sinned, and has kept the requirements of God's Law. What he's done, however, is no different than adultery.

I find it hard to believe that Jesus' words apply to other divorced people, like a person who was divorced before he was saved, and then, after he's born again, falls in love with and marries another Christian. That hardly seems like something that could be considered equivalent to adultery. Nor do I think Jesus' words would apply to a Christian who finds himself divorced from a nonbeliever, and who later marries a Christian. If everyone who has been divorced and is now remarried is living in the sin of adultery, then not one of them is going to heaven, because the Bible plainly says that adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). That fact in itself tells me that what Jesus said has little application to many divorced and remarried people.

It's important that we consider all that God has said when we interpret the few things Jesus said about divorce and remarriage. Some people seem to ignore everything else in the Bible, including the gospel of the wonderful forgiveness that is offered us through Christ, in order to form a theology about divorce! In their minds, God will forgive every sin except divorce or remarriage. If that were true, we'd have to start preaching the gospel differently, telling people, "If you believe in Jesus, all your sins will be forgiven, except if you've been divorced and remarried, because then you're an adulterer as long as you remain married, and adulterers aren't saved!"

Q. What could an unmarried person do to avoid ever getting a divorce?

A. First of all, he should make sure that he is fully committed to Christ. Second, he should make certain that the person he intends to marry is fully committed to Christ. Third, he should not hurry into marriage, but take his time in getting to know his potential mate. Fourth, he should learn to be unselfish and walk in love, and look for those same qualities in a potential spouse. Fifth, he should seek the advice of his parents and friends, getting their perspective about any potential spouse. Finally, he should keep in mind that it is better to be unhappily unmarried than unhappily married!

Application: There is much more that could be said about the subject of divorce and remarriage from a biblical standpoint. However, the most important thing to remember is that God never intends for anyone to be divorced, but when it occurs, He has made provision for forgiveness.

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