

# Can I Divorce My Spouse Because of Adultery?

by Shane Idleman

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*The speaker emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's word in marriage and divorce, and argues that most divorces have no biblical grounds.*

**Duration:** 56:56

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:3

**Topics:** "Divorce", "Restoration"

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## Description

Shane Idleman addresses the complex issue of divorce and remarriage, particularly in cases of adultery, emphasizing the importance of seeking God's guidance rather than rushing into decisions. He acknowledges the pain and destruction that divorce can cause, especially to children, and advocates for restoration and healing in marriages. Idleman stresses that while Jesus provides grounds for divorce in cases of sexual immorality, the heart of God is for reconciliation and healing. He encourages individuals to seek God through prayer and scripture, rather than looking for loopholes or rushing to divorce. Ultimately, he offers hope for those hurting, reminding them that God's grace and restoration are always available.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Matthew chapter 19. Matthew chapter 19. And I will tell you up front that this is going to be a controversial sermon in the next week or two if I don't get through all of it tonight, which I know I won't.

What we're talking about is divorce and remarriage. Divorce and remarriage. And there's not a month that goes by that I don't get a rebuke from somebody online.

Saying that you can only divorce, or you can't divorce unless somebody dies. It's the only way you can get remarried if your spouse dies. Now, what I want to do though, the title of the message was, Can I Divorce My Spouse? Can I Divorce My Spouse? And it turned into two messages.

I think next week I'm going to tackle abandonment or you're abandoned by your spouse. We got to talk about abuse as well. So I added, Can I Divorce My Spouse Because of Adultery? Can I Divorce My Spouse Because of Adultery? And we're in Matthew 19.

We're starting that. That's what Jesus is going to talk about. So I think we're on good ground talking about what he's talking about.

But I will let you know up front that I move in this area cautiously and carefully. Because only God can answer this question, I truly believe. I've got away from recommending divorce.

I'm not going to say, Oh, you definitely have grounds. Go for it. Because I believe in restoration.

I believe in seeking God with all of our heart, with all of our strength. And I don't think a pastor or anybody should be able to tell you in this area, Yes, you can. Now I can say, Here's my thoughts.

Here's what I believe. Here's what I believe the Bible says. And the church is divided on this area.

We'll talk about that as we get into this. But I believe that only God can answer this question because I don't have all the information. Because everybody will tell you what you want to hear.

And they'll paint this picture in such a light on this canvas of you have to come to the conclusion, Oh, sure, you've got grounds for divorce. Why didn't you dump that loser months ago? Because I'm hearing that aspect of it, but not what God is doing in your heart or his heart or vice versa. So I try to not tell somebody, Yes, go get divorced.

And you have grounds for it. You better do it quickly. Because I want them to seek God.

And I can offer insight and input. But that's why I want to move carefully and cautiously. Because this is a big deal.

This is a big deal. God hates divorce. And anybody who's been there knows why.

It destroys. It ruins. It's very destructive.

Let me read what Michael Reagan, the son of Ronald Reagan, wrote on his parents' divorce. Divorce is where two adults take everything that matters to a child. The child's home, family, security, and the sense of being loved and protected.

And they smash it to pieces, leave it in ruins on the floor, then walk out and leave the child to clean up the mess. And that's why this is a big issue. And, you know, I'm going to be careful here, but I'm also going to shoot you straight.

And I've observed over the last year or so, I've obviously, as you have, you've known people who have divorced, right, or separated. And it's an epidemic in the church. And not just this church, everywhere.

And I would say, as God is my witness, the last 10 or 12 dozen or so divorces that I've seen, or where people are separated right now, have no biblical grounds. Or they could have worked through it, but chose not to. And again, this is my, from my vantage point, 80 to 90% of the divorces we're seeing have no biblical grounds.

And if they do, they're on very shaky ground. And that's why this is a big issue. It's an epidemic.

But what we need to do, and again, I want to make that clear, I am a big fan of restoration. I believe in the God who restores. Even if adultery occurs, it's not the unpardonable sin.

Rejecting Christ is. So even though I've seen marriages where that has occurred, come back even stronger. Yes, it's painful.

Yes, it's destructive. Yes, there are consequences. But God restores.

So I'm a big fan of restoration. That's usually where my heart's going, in that direction. And people that are in a hurry to get a divorce, that's often not a good thing.

Because the heart's not right. So, but first I want to lay the foundation before I read Matthew 19. We read this probably a year ago.

But Jesus said, Matthew 7, starting verse 24, Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them. And this is crucial. This is Marriage Counseling 101 right here.

Whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them. Even when they're separated. Even when they're in difficult marriage.

Even when life is challenging. Even through all of that. He who hears my sayings and does them.

I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. And it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

So Jesus is saying, those who hear what I'm saying and they do it. They're like the person who built their house on the rock. And anytime we talk about the subject of marriage, separation, divorce.

We have to look at this scripture. Is this being obeyed? Is Jesus' words not just being heard, but are they being obeyed? And right there's the problem. There's the answer to 90% of the marriage problems.

Right here. Hearing, but not doing. Hearing, but not doing.

And then those who hear my words, but don't do them. Are building their house on the sand. Building their marriage on the sand.

The sinking sand of man's philosophy. So that's the foundation. We look at what God's word says, and then we apply it.

Even when we don't feel like it? Yeah, especially when you don't feel like it. That's actually when we're supposed to apply it. I have to forgive that person? I don't feel like it exactly.

I have to train my children in the fear and admonition of the Lord? I don't feel like it. I just want to watch Netflix for three hours. Right? You never can go by these feelings that are contrary often to God's word.

And I've said this a lot, and I don't want to, you know, belabor this point, but I think it needs to be repeated. That we actually live in deception when we hear God's word, but we don't apply it. So you have many marriages in turmoil or heading to divorce court.

They know what to say. They hear it. They know it, but because they don't apply it.

James 1.22, be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own self. So we have to remember this. We live in deception when we're not obeying the word of God.

Period. Shane, can you candy coat that and sugar coat it a little bit? No. I can't because it's crystal clear in scripture.

So if we're not building on the foundation, that's why it's coming apart often. And here's the battle. We must do what is right regardless of feelings.

This is why obedience to God's word in a genuine relationship is so important. Because my relationship with Christ and obeying his word, that's what steers the vessel. Come on, feelings.

You're coming. You're following me. I'm not going that direction.

And that's why it's so important. As a person seeking God and obeying his words, the feelings come later. But we want to be led by feelings.

I just don't feel a certain way. And feelings actually are wonderful. It's one reason why we are not robots.

Can you imagine a life void of feelings? Are you happy? Are you sad? Are you joyful? I'm just nothing. I don't feel anything. There's a birth of a child.

Well, that's wonderful. What's for dinner? I'm getting married later today. I guess it's something to be excited about.

I don't know. Who's playing the Broncos? There's just no feelings. So I believe that God gave us feelings to experience him, experience life.

I don't like the downers, but thank God for the joy and all these things, the unspeakable joy sometimes of following Christ. But they should not, and I've said this before, but feelings are the caboos of the train. They're not the engine.

So when it comes to marriage, remarriage, divorce, you can't trust feelings. And now you know I'm not talking about spiritual discernment here, right? Because spiritual discernment is like this just doesn't feel right. This doesn't feel right, especially if you're dating somebody.

You're like, you know, this is not going anywhere. This doesn't feel right. That's spiritual discernment.

That's good. But spiritual discernment lines up with truth. Feelings often take you away from truth.

And people get in relationships they shouldn't be in just because it feels right. They're going outside of God's parameter. It just feels right.

No, you're in lust, not love. It just looks right. It doesn't feel right.

And we get caught up in entrusting those feelings, and feelings weren't given to guide us. They were given to follow a right decision. Think about young adults, teenagers.

How many problems do they get in because it just feels right? You think Nike's onto something? Just do it. Just do it. And that's actually why we're in the situation we're in with our nation.

We're going by how feelings make us feel versus what does the truth say. And this is interesting. I actually just wrote this down today.

I was reading a good book. It's about 100 years old. I can't remember.

It's a biography of somebody. And he made a statement in there. When you read something, you just put the book down and just ponder it for a minute.

This guy was pondering, and he was fighting with God. I don't know if you've ever done that before. It's not fun.

He was going to surrender his life. He knew what that meant. But he's surrendering his self, his ambition, his pursuit of money.

He knows what it's going to cost him. He says, okay, Lord, you have it all. But he couldn't do it.

After five or six days a week, he couldn't surrender that will. He couldn't do it. And he made a point here.

He said our will will never want to submit to God's will. We have to ask God to come in and help us and give us that ability to submit to his will. And he said two opposing wills will never come into alignment.

So when your will's going against God's will, that will never come into alignment. The idea is to redirect your will to go in alignment with God's will. Because his will won't change.

His will, as sure as that sun is coming up tomorrow morning, his will will not change. And you have two opposing wills. And God will not force.

He will not manipulate. He's not going to cause you to do something. And so you have to get your will in alignment with his will.

And that's the same thing on this message for couples. Marriage, can you imagine aligning our will with God's will? That's when things begin to fall in place. So when we go outside of that, we're actually fighting against God.

And we're going against his will, against what we know to be right. So that's the backdrop. And then we get into Matthew 19, beginning verse 3. The Pharisees also came to him, testing him, and saying to him, which is Jesus, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason? And Jesus answered and said to them, Have you not read that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female? And said, For this reason, because God created them male and female, for this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife.

Now I don't know if you caught it much, but when people say Jesus didn't say anything about gay marriage, well that speaks volumes in my opinion. God made them male and female. He created them to fit together, to come together, and to be one flesh.

Anything outside of that is called perversion. That's where the word pervert comes from. Perversion, you're perverting God's perfect plan and design.

So somebody says, I take offense at the word perversion. Well, that's what is happening. You're perverting his truth.

So Jesus right here is saying that that's marriage. That's God's ideal. His plan is for a man and woman to come together and to be joined, and the two shall become one.

And I'm not going to get into the physical makeup and different things. You know what he's talking about here. The two shall become one.

It fits. It works how God created it. Two of the same sex doesn't work.

Just, you know, let's leave it at that. But that's how God's creation, how God created us. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

And I think that's why divorce hurts so much, is you're ripping that flesh apart. You're ripping what God has put together apart. Let not man put asunder.

And it hurts. There's pain there. There's no way around it.

So then, they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together from creation, how he created them, he designed it, marriage is his idea. Therefore, God has joined together.

Let not man separate. They said to him, Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away? So it's interesting. Moses actually commanded the people to give the woman basically a certificate of divorce in order to put her away.

Jesus said, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. Now, let's stop there for a minute. I think there's some confusion here.

Actually, Moses here allowing the men to give the women a certificate of divorce was actually to benefit the women. Here's why. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones wrote a good piece on this, and if you follow other church history and different things, they were divorcing their wives without any cause.

You burnt dinner. Get out of the tent. You're done.

You're out. Anything. You're divorcing, and now she has the stigma of this divorcee who can't remarry.

So he says, because of the hardness of your hearts, you arrogant men, you've got to give her a certificate of divorce, saying you divorced her. You're releasing her, so she's now free, and she's not going to carry that stigma. So it's actually a way to help women, according to D. Martin Lloyd-Jones and other theologians, which I would tend to agree with if you read this in context.

He's not saying because of the hardness of your heart, now you can divorce your wives. They were already divorcing. It was an epidemic.

One, two, three. Burn the food. Getting older.

We don't like each other anymore, just for whatever reason. But now the man has to give her a certificate of divorce, and there's a whole study on that, of what that means and what goes along with that. So Jesus is saying because of the hardness of these men's hearts, you're not just going to get away with abusing and taking advantage of.

You're going to actually have to provide and write them a certificate of divorce, allowing them now that you are releasing them. So that's the thought behind that. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, see, here's where it gets interesting.

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery. There's no way to candy coat that. And I think if this scripture was taken more seriously, it would cause a lot of people to sit up straight and take marriage seriously and understand before I say I do, I better understand what God's heart is here.

But failure to look at the scriptures has led to the other extreme, no-fault divorce. You know what that is? There's irreconcilable differences. Every time somebody tells me, well, it's just irreconcilable differences, can you tell me one couple that doesn't have? Well, they have reconciled differences because they choose to reconcile them, but we all come to the marriage with irreconcilable differences, two sinners coming together, two very selfish people, and it's not pretty.

So Jesus said that whoever divorces his wife, think about this, whoever divorces his wife commits adultery. And whoever marries a woman, divorced, here he goes on to say, commits adultery. And whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.

Now, this whole debate is over except for sexual immorality, and I'm going to get to that in a minute, but I want to just, a few things that come to mind. The two shall become one flesh. And I remember I found it in my book, I wrote it down a while back, and I want to use it again.

A survivor of the Holocaust wrote this. Now, this is a survivor of the Holocaust. You know what that is? The emotional pain and brokenness that I experienced from divorce was greater than the pain of the concentration camps.

Why is that? Well, I mean, only she can answer, but I think the pain, that's hard, that's pain, physically. But when you add now emotional pain and abandonment and desertion and all these things that go with it, it's unbearable in many cases. That's why, let me be up front with you, if God doesn't rebuild your life, the second or third or fourth marriage isn't going to be any better.

The grass is not greener on the other side. It is not greener on the other side. So always remember that.

The two shall become one flesh, and the enemy does what he can to break... Why is there such a great debate now over marriage, and the enemy's going after marriage? Because that's the foundation of society. The family's the foundation of society. Now that gay marriage is the law of the land, now you're going to see polygamy being tried to be passed in the courts.

You'll see incest, what we would consider incest. Can brother marry sister? Can mom marry son? Can I marry my cat? I mean, you just opened up Pandora's box. When you depart from God's word and depart from his truth, mock my words, sin never slows down.

It just keeps getting more and more and more and more perverted. I could tell you things that make you sick to your stomach about what pedophiles are trying to pass, and lower the age of sexual consent. I mean, if that doesn't well up some righteous indignation and force us through the prayer closet, I don't know what will.

All because God's design in marriage was being mocked and ridiculed, and five justices on a court decided to tell us what's right and what's wrong. They know not that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from them. There's no truth there.

They're departing from him. So be very careful. The two shall become one flesh.

It hurts. Divorce hurts. And I want to offer a quick perspective on this.

I would prefer the environment of a difficult marriage over the living condition in most of the world. So what I'm meaning here is I'm not trying to excuse abuse or different things, because we're going to get into that in the future. But if you look at, some marriages are difficult, right? But a lot of the ones I know, they're not that difficult.

People just are not wanting to work things out. They're not that difficult. And you look at how the majority of the world is living.

Take Syria, for example. You want to be fleeing your land and running into a different country? Look at Iraq. Look how thankful we should be.

And from that thankful heart, that should propel us into a healthy marriage and be thankful, yes, this is difficult. Life is difficult. Life is challenging.

But I've got so much to be thankful for. So it's important to put things in perspective. And this is what I just said, the next point.

Unless God rebuilds a foundation, those divorced may find themselves in the same situation with the second, third, or fourth spouse. Now, I'm going to get into this area of adultery, but I want to throw this out there first and let you know that experience plays a role in theology. Experience plays a role in theology.

Now, we should never interpret Scripture in light of our experiences, but our experiences can be interpreted in light of Scripture. What I mean by this is this. John Piper, for example, a wonderful teacher, a man I look up to.

I've got his books, listen to his podcast. He would say that remarriage is never allowed unless the person dies. And I read his many, many pages.

I don't know if you'd call it a dissertation almost, but this long article on why and breaking down the words and different pornea and different things. But you have his perspective. Forty years of marriage, who knows how.

Very healthy marriage, so it's very easy to say, yeah, just work it out. Not even in case of adultery, not in the case of abuse, you just stick it through. I did, it works.

And it did, thank God, for their marriage. But you take a 22-year-old woman who we've been counseling now and had to get out of the house because of dangerous situations with the little baby, and adultery is probably involved, drugs is probably involved, and now her life is over. Nope, can't never marry again.

Nope, nope, you're toast. You're 22. Just enjoy it.

Sit back, be single. Now, I'm not trying to poke fun because if Scripture teaches it, Scripture teaches it, and you deal with it. But I'm showing you how experience can play a role in how we view the Scriptures.

On this topic, the gifts of the Spirit. Your experience will be how you read 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 will be directly related to your experience with the power of the Holy Spirit. If you believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and you've experienced those mighty moves of God in your own heart, you read what Paul wrote, and you say, Yes, I experienced that.

It lines up with Scripture. But then you have other people say, Nope, that's not for today. I've never experienced it.

So that's why we do have to be careful. Another example would be a 22-year-old woman. Got married, found out her husband is a pedophile, and lied about everything.

Well, sorry, you're stuck. Just grin and bear it for the next 50 years. But what's the heart of God behind this? What's the heart of God? Is this person going to restore the years that the canker worm has devoured? Is there a biblical way here to move forward? Because according to some people, here's what would happen.

Say this person's in their 20s. The wife cheats on them, a consistent pattern of adultery, has actually abandoned the person. They're gone, they're living with somebody else, and this person's left.

No kids now, and I'll never be able to have kids. I'll never be able to experience a wonderful marriage. No, sorry.

And so that's why we have to look at the Scripture, the totality of what Scripture says versus just our perspective and our experience, what we went through. And I do want to be careful in this area, because I don't want to endorse anything. I don't want to just mock what God's Word says, because it says in this area of adultery that we have to be careful.

And how many people are actually getting divorced that really have no biblical grounds? So that's what the debate is. The debate is really over this whole area of divorce and remarriage. Only unless a spouse dies can you get remarried.

That's what this camp would say. And this is the camp where I get mean e-mails once a month. Telling me I need to repent to my congregation, and I'm in sin and all this stuff.

It's this side. And I like to remind them, well, where's the fruit of the Spirit in your e-mail? It's love and joy and seizing your words with grace and not coming down judgmental. Oh, they get real mad, and they use capital letters and explanation points.

So you've got this side over here. And usually these people have been hurt and wounded is what happens. So it's a good ministry opportunity.

And a lot of them have had a different experience. I remember one guy, he just, I mean, the e-mail's like this long. I can't get through the first one.

I'm like, oh, just let this one go. But come to find out, it's because his wife used certain Scriptures and left him. Where he was hurt by that and wanted the Scriptures to force her to come back.

So if you read between the lines, you can see where people are. But the Scripture, not even here, but other places, Jesus says, he who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. It's real, it's clear on that area.

God hates divorce. But then this side, even people you know, John MacArthur, probably, and a lot of the guys you listen to on the radio, they would believe that you don't, the only biblical grounds for divorce is adultery and abandonment, as Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians. And we're gonna talk about those things.

But then abuse comes in there. What about the woman who's being physically abused, almost to the point of rape? And a very verbal and abusive husband who's causing damage. What do you do with that? Just grin and bear it? Come on.

So you have to have compassion in those areas. So we're gonna hopefully talk about those. But I wanna spend a few minutes here on this point of adultery.

But I wanna, hopefully this will help. Because a lot of people right now, as the world gets more and more dangerous, and as the end times are coming, and people are not enduring sound doctrine, you're gonna see the families break up even more. I think we're gonna be seeing divorce even becoming more prevalent.

So four things I want you to know that will prevent you from hearing God in this area. And this is mainly for the person who's trapped in between, doesn't know what to do. Number one, in a hurry.

You will not hear from God if you are in a hurry. Not waiting and contending for restoration. God blesses and strengthens a waiting heart.

But a heart that rushes is often confused. So when it comes to, can I divorce? He's committed adultery, he's got this pattern. And if the person's in a hurry, God wants us to slow down.

Don't sit on the race horse and get going. Just relax. Wait on me.

Those who wait on me shall renew their strength. Wait, let me direct you, let me guide you. Maybe I'm working things in the other person's heart you're not aware of.

So just wait. Don't move quickly. There's exceptions, of course.

But waiting on God. And I joked about this last week, but it's true. And I can talk to those people who are in a hurry.

Let's get those divorce papers signed. I want to hit Las Vegas and meet my next husband. Really? Can you say divorce number three coming up? Number four? I mean, that's just not, you should not be in a hurry to get out of your covenant relationship and supposedly find the greener grass.

There's something wrong there. The heart is not in a good spot. Number B, letter B. Not seeking God through his word, prayer, and fasting.

This point, and you guys hear me talk about this a lot, but this point absolutely amazes me. The majority of people I know who are having marital issues won't do this. There's no prayer and fasting and seeking God.

Listen, this is a battle. You've got to pull out the big guns. You've got to pull out the big guns for this battle.

This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. The big guns. I'm talking time in the word.

I'm saying my calendar, if I was going through, I'd put time on my calendar for God. Time for study. I'm fasting.

I'm starving the flesh. I need to hear from God. I'm pulling out the big guns.

But people don't do that. They rarely do that. They're contemplating divorce.

They're contemplating hurting children. They're like, I haven't took time for prayer or anything. The Bible says no, you have to take time and seek God and let him direct you.

Let me say this. If you're not spending extended time in worship, prayer, and fasting, but instead are busy, bitter, and belligerent, you will not get clear direction. Actually, you'll get direction, but it's not God.

And I see so many spouses, and maybe rightly so, but they're so bitter. They're so bitter and angry and belligerent. It's like you could cook an egg on their head.

I'm like, God doesn't direct through that type of, you've got to get the attitude right. Now, is there pain that's inexcusable? Of course. I'm not trying to minimize the pain of abandonment.

I'm not trying to minimize anything, but I am saying that God will not guide a person who's not seeking him, who's being bitter and belligerent and just upset, and they want this divorce. Letter C. This is a biggie as well. Looking for loopholes rather than scriptural truths.

Say no more on that one, right? This is why this prevents a person from hearing God and repairing their marriage. They are looking for loopholes, not scriptural truths. How do you know? Because they'll ask 25 people, what do you think, what do you think, what do you think, is there a loophole, loophole anywhere, loophole, loophole, loophole, where, oh, that's true, that's true.

Loophole, loophole. Versus what does the Bible say? What's a scriptural truth? Because to be honest with you, the majority of, again, of the divorces that I know about are separations, they're not biblical. They're not biblical, but they're trying to find something there.

There's a loophole. He's not getting back to me. She's doing this.

They're being mean. I can't live like this. And they're not responding.

They're not changing. Okay, got it. That's not biblical.

That's not a reason. So you have to be careful in this area. Letter D, giving up because we see no evidence of change.

They throw in the towel, they're not changing. Guess what? God doesn't tell them to say they need to change. He says you need to change.

God never says go worry about the other person. He tells me love my wife as Christ loved the church. You work on you.

You work on you. Let God change the other person. But we hear this all the time.

They're not changing, Shane. I've had enough. I'm filing next week.

Okay, but you're not changing either. Yeah, well, I don't want to talk about that. No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

We're talking about that because you have to change you. I don't care what they did. I don't care what they're doing.

You, where are you changing? But what happens is something called blame shifting. If I can shift the blame over to them, I'm off the hook. Right? You don't do that? Just me sometimes? Just shift the blame

right on over.

I'm off the hook. So you will not hear from God in these areas. Giving up because you see no evidence of change in the other person.

Looking for loopholes. You're not seeking God through his word, prayer, and fasting. And you're in a hurry and you won't slow down and wait on God.

Let me tell you how, right word here, how deceived many people are. A lot of people just heard these four points and they will still not apply them. Sometimes they go and say, Lord, why didn't you even call me to preach? Uh-huh, sounds good.

I'm not gonna do it though. But listen, the praise reports that we hear often are when these principles are applied. So it goes back to the question, how bad do you want it? Because your will and God's will, if they're not going in the same direction, it's not gonna work.

It's ugly. Actually, when your will's going against God's will, that's where depression comes in. And fear, anxiety, hurt, animosity, bitterness.

Fighting against God, you go to bed angry, you wake up angry. Because the will's not aligning with God's will. Now don't worry, there'll be some encouragement here.

I'm very... Actually, my heart is for those going through separation and divorce. You know, I can relate. I know how painful it is.

So my heart is there. But my heart's also saying, how many of these could be repaired? How many of these could be repaired? I like what the Westminster Confession of Faith said, chapter 24. Nothing but adultery or willful desertion is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage.

So you see this big divide in the church. And you say, but why do people think that you can never divorce, ever? Actually, you can never remarry unless the person dies. Well, again, Scripture is very clear that God hates divorce.

The Scripture is very clear that adultery is a serious sin. But there's differences in interpretation. So here's what we're gonna talk about.

Except for sexual immorality, right? Just the fact that this is added into the command is important, I would think, right? I mean, in my opinion, Jesus would have just said, I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason commits adultery. So because he puts in there, it's me epipornia. Me epipornia.

Except for sexual immorality. That's in the original. That's in there, in the Greek language.

It's not somebody added it later. He's saying except for sexual immorality. Now, what does he mean by, well, morality.

What's morality? God's standard. Immorality is perverting God's standard. So Jesus is saying when you pervert God's standard of sexual appetites there in the marriage relationship, you're giving the person cause to step away.

Now, let me, there's so much I could say here for the next hour, actually. I'm not the type of advocate who says, in case somebody commits adultery, end it. Where's the heart of, there's understanding, there's grace, there's forgiveness.

What this is, I believe, is the same thing when Paul said, do you not know that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God? The key word in that is those who practice such things. If it's a lifestyle, if this person cheated last month, he's cheating in six months, and it's a lifestyle, caught him with pornography, it's just a lifestyle of pornia, of sexual morality. There's grounds there for divorce, according to how you would read the scripture.

Now, here's why people like John Piper and others say, it doesn't mean what I just said it means. Why does Matthew, here's what they'd say, Matthew used the word pornia instead of the word mohia. Mohia means adultery.

So why wouldn't he just use the word mohia but he used the word pornia? What's going on here? Well, he's saying if it was because of adultery, they would use a more specific word. But not really, in my opinion, pornia is any sexual activity outside the context of marriage. So if a person, homosexuality, or bestiality, or pedophilia, or necrophilia, or all these, any type of sexual immorality outside the bonds of marriage, he's saying there's no grounds for divorce except if that person is sexually immoral in those areas.

So in my opinion, just because he didn't use the word mohia, which means adultery, he used a more extensive word, pornia, which means any, and actually, you can see this word again where Jesus says, I believe it's in Matthew earlier, it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him, it's what comes out of him. What comes out of him is pornia, sexual immorality, all illicit type of sexual activity. So that's one argument.

The other group says, this other group over here on this side that I get many emails from, say that Jesus is talking about incest in this area. If you get married and you find out, whoops, we're related, then there's grounds for sexual, but it doesn't say that. I mean, that's just reading into that what's not in that.

He said except for pornia, any type of sexual activity. And here's what I think what John Piper says. Some say it's when the husband finds out she was not a virgin.

So if a person, they get married, and you find out they're not a virgin, how do you find that out? Well, ask your mom or dad afterwards. You find out, it's like, uh-oh, you misled me. This is, you know, you were sexually immoral before our wedding night.

Now you have grounds for divorcing them is what they would say. John Piper in the paper wrote, years ago I taught our congregation two evening services concerning my understanding of this verse and argued that except for immorality did not refer to adultery, but to premarital sexual fornication which a man or woman discovers in the betrothed partner. Then they have grounds for divorce.

The only problem I have with that is, although he's correct that would be deception, that's a sexual immorality, and he's basing it off, why would it be based off that alone but not a consistent pattern of adultery? When you look at consistency throughout Scripture on what this word means in the lifestyle here. So in other words, if a couple got married and found out, listen, you were sexually active before we got married, I have grounds to divorce you, why would a consistent pattern of adultery not carry just as

much weight as that? So to me these arguments, I couldn't quite get on the bandwagon of never, never remarry unless your spouse dies. Then you could.

I just can't see that. In both cases these are sexual sins, right? That they're finding out here. Actually, and this is just my opinion, if he found out that she was unfaithful, premarital sex before they got married, to me, in my opinion, that would not be as devastating as adultery later on.

Because hey, there's forgiveness. Yes, this happened. There's forgiveness there, God's grace, and they can move forward in their marriage.

Where adultery does a lot more damage because what it is, here's the big deal. God says you can't, when the husband and wife come together, the two shall become one flesh. What adultery is, is you're uniting with someone other than your spouse and you break that bond.

Marriage in God's eyes was not when the state of California says, here's your marriage license. It was when Adam knew his wife, consummation. When he, and Joseph, or I think it was Abraham sent out his servant to go find his son, a wife, and then the Bible says he knew his wife intimately.

That's what it is. The two become one flesh. So when you break that off through adultery and you go after another, you are breaking off that marital commitment.

And that's, I believe what Jesus is saying here, except for, except for sexual morality, you cannot divorce a spouse. He said to them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wife, but from the beginning it was not so. Marriage is not the issue here.

I'm sorry, remarriage, in my opinion, is not the issue here. Manipulation and abandonment are. That's really what he's talking about.

The hardness of your heart, you're manipulating and you're abandoning your spouse. You're hard hearts. We're gonna deal with that.

So it's not, can they go remarry? This is about manipulation and abandonment. The certificate of divorce was to protect the woman. And I appreciate the words of commentator Jay Nolan here on this point.

He said, the normal understanding of Matthew 5.32 runs the danger of leaving the woman involved a double victim. She has been divorced by a husband who may well have just rejected her at his own whim and is now, she's barred from any new relationship because she bears the stigma of the divorcee. So he's saying, Jesus, Moses said, because of the hardness of your hearts, you're gonna have to give them a certificate of divorce so you're releasing them.

If you're divorcing them, it's not their fault. But this has a twofold warning. And this is where we miss it many times.

Do not divorce without cause. Do not divorce without cause. And I usually encourage people where an affair takes place, I'm still a proponent of restoration.

Shit, I can't believe, yeah, God restored. Who am I to, I mean, God is the God of restoration. But how does restoration take place when repentance takes place? And what's a fruit of repentance? Change.

You stop and you turn, you go another direction. So if this person, oop, slept up six months later, oop, slept up again, six months, that's not a slip-up. You're a dog.

You're a low-down, you know, let me stop there. That's not a slip-up. That's an unrepentant heart who has a lifestyle.

I mean, a friend of mine, I actually didn't know him very well, but he must have, and this is conservative numbers, he must have cheated on his wife that I'm aware of six times in 10 years. Finally, she said, I'm done. Because there's a consistent pattern there.

Now, I'm not saying six or five or four. I'm just saying, from my perspective, if that happens, it's workable if repentance takes place. And there's bitterness, there's anger, there's trust issues.

Forgiveness is a decision, but trust is a process. And it's a long process. And you should be open, transparent.

Here's my phone, here's my computer, here's everything. And there's repentance. But if there's not repentance occurring and the person keeps, oops, oops, oops, then there's grounds.

I even knew a person, too, of a person who would keep getting prostitutes. And he had the audacity to sit and throw Scripture in the face of his wife. Really? I mean, but that's the world we live in.

Arrogance. So that's the difference here. Sexual immorality, porneia.

May epiporneia, consistent, active pattern of sexual sin, the wife or the husband. It happens both ways, right? Let's just be honest. They have flirtatious eyes just like other guys and girls here.

It applies to both of us. So that's a two-fold warning. Do not divorce without cause, number two.

Do not pursue a relationship with someone who has abandoned their spouse or who has divorced without cause. This one, I think, should be number one on the Christian radar. Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep.

This happens way too much. Way too much. Do not pursue a relationship with someone who has abandoned their spouse.

We meet somebody, oh, I'm separated. Oh, you're separated, okay. I don't know, and kind of stay active and going together.

And then we have plan B in the background and then we get together and we get married. No, if there's not a biblical, if that spouse isn't released biblically, you better not be dating them. I would seriously, then you're in a very dangerous position because that person isn't released according to God's word.

This group, though, would say they're never released. But I'm talking to the group who meets in the middle a little bit here and says that because of sexual morality. Now, if you're coming into this message late, which happens on the radio a lot, too, I want to get the point across.

Clearly understand that I'm not advocating divorce, nor am I saying that if you are currently separated that divorce is an option because better opportunities await you. God hates divorce. And anyone who's been there knows why.

I believe first and foremost in reconciliation and restoration, and that most people give up too soon. Listen, if it took years to tear the marriage down, it's going to take a little time to build it back up. When you put a little apple seed in the ground, you water it, and a couple weeks go by, where's the apples? A couple weeks go by, right? Where's the apples? I don't even see a bud yet.

That's the same thing with repairing a relationship. And when you say, hey, I'm in it for the long haul, you've been hurt, you've been damaged, how can I help? But see, we're not in it for the long haul. Actually, here's the problem.

Many times, they've got plan B right back here. Oh, let's just shoot straight tonight. I came here to shoot straight.

I brought my .30-06 with the sniper's rifle or scope. That's what happens. If plan A doesn't work out, I've got plan B right here, and I know her name and her number.

So we try to push plan A. Hurry up, plan A. Oh, see, it's not happening. Pastor, can I have proof? Can I have validity? Can you validate now my decision to go to plan B? No, I can't. That's why people want to move quick, and they're in a hurry.

They're not in it for the long haul, because there's plan B. I can get away from this person. I can lead a quiet life. Many people have plan B in the back of their mind.

God says, don't come to me with plan B. Plan A is, I'm in this for the long haul. When you tell a spouse, hey, I'm in this for the long haul. I've broken your trust.

What can I do to rebuild it? You might have a glass thrown at you, or some dishes. Let them go through that pain that's been caused. Because if you're in it for the long haul, you'll sit and you'll wait.

And that blesses God, I believe, too. He loves it to honor that. And that's why a personal relationship with Jesus, along with genuine brokenness and repentance, are vitally important.

Through that relationship, and only through that relationship can we make the right decision. See, are you getting the picture? Why I always talk about the relationship with Christ through brokenness and humility. Here's why.

Because when that happens, your will goes in alignment with His. That's the only way to get direction in this area. The only way.

So when people say, Shane, should I move on? Or should I hold on for restoration? What should I do? Seek Him. Seek the gift giver. Seek Him who put you together.

Seek Him. I'm not butting in here. Seek Him.

And so once humility takes place and brokenness, and we begin to seek God, now see what happens. We align our will up with His. And we're going in the same direction.

And for some people, that might result in divorce. I don't know. I would never say that God's, that it's always going to result in restoration.

Why? Because you can't change the heart of the other person. Here's the problem with divorce. The choices of one affect the other.

And affect the family. We can't change that. That's why Paul, there's good information in Corinthians we can get into too when Paul talks about if an unbelieving spouse wants to stay with you, stay with them.

But if they decide to depart, that a believer's not under bondage in such a case. They're not a slave. Now, this group who likes to email me is going to interpret that differently too.

So that'll be next week. But suffice it to say that there is hope. That's what I want to close on.

I'm not going to give anyone permission, but there is hope for the hurting. I like what D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said. God forbid that there should be anyone who feels that he or she has sinned himself or herself outside the love of God or outside his kingdom because of adultery.

No, if you truly repent and realize the enormity of your sin and cast yourself on his boundless love, mercy, and grace, you will be forgiven. So see, you can hear everybody, you know, they hear this message like, uh-oh, uh-oh. I probably shouldn't have married this person.

Hey, it's very healthy to say, Lord, I made a mistake. I sinned. Forgive me.

See, this stuff isn't the unpardonable sin. Rejecting Christ is. But some groups want to make this the unpardonable sin.

But it's not. So the hope is, okay, you might have married somebody outside of God's will. Repent, acknowledge it, say, Lord, redirect me.

Don't leave them. I'm just saying, redirect me. Redirect my heart.

You might be in a relationship now or in a marriage now that you don't know what to do. Say, Lord, there's hope for the hurting. Direct me.

I give this relationship to you. Direct me. See, there's hope for the hurting in all of this.

And many often thank the Lord for using divorce to bring them back to Him. I don't believe that God causes divorce, but He does use it to bring the prodigal son or daughter home. That's a wonderful thing, if there can be any redeeming factor about any of this, is these can be wake-up calls.

I believe that separation or divorce can be a wake-up call. Sometimes it's a final blow that has to take place in order for an arrogant man or an arrogant woman to truly repent. That happened to me.

Some of you know my story. That's why I get the mean emails. 1998, there's four years of marriage.

She said, I'm done. There's adultery evolved on her end. Abandonment evolved on her end.

And I caused it. I caused it. We're two sinners.

We weren't even believers. I don't know where she, I don't want to get into all this. I'd have to take a whole hour to give my testimony.

But 1998, God used that to break me. So the reason I'm up here today is because of what took place in my heart 16 years ago or 18, whatever that was. So that's what I mean from a position of experience.

But I didn't rush it. I contended for restoration for three years after the divorce. I prayed.

I contended. I waited on God. Didn't date.

Lord, what do you want to do? And I felt a sense of peace. She's living with somebody. She's done.

You're released. But still, this group says, no, you're living in sin. You and your wife are going to hell.

You need to repent. So I need to leave my current life and go back to her? Yes. That's ridiculous.

These people are so warped sometimes in their thinking. But then I have to say, so I won't have the four beautiful kids that I have in a marriage that God has wanted me to have because I should have been bound to that in my 20s? See how you've got to think these things through and see the heart of God. So that's why I can relate.

That's how I can relate is because I had these things that happen. Adultery, abandonment, and I feel the pain. There's nothing.

Man, that's why people are suicidal sometimes because there's such a low point of depression. But had it not been for that, had it not been for that, I think I would have been dead by now and not have turned to God. But he uses that.

So that's the hope for the hurting is that you take this hurt and you go to God with it. And then you know him as the great healer, the great physician, the great redeemer. Most people don't take their hurt to him.

They'll take it to the porch but not go in the house. Let me just drop off this package like UPS. But God says, no, you need to come in.

You need to sit down. You need to spend time with me. Let me rebuild your life.

Let me strengthen you. See, that's the answer. You may have biblical grounds.

It may result in divorce. But don't you want to go forward knowing that you sought God and had peace in the midst of the storm. You did all that you can do.

See, I believe that when you do all that you can do biblically, God sees your heart. Remember David? He wanted to build the temple. He got Nathan.

He goes, we're going to build the temple. And God said, David, you can't build the temple. You're a man of war and you're not going to build my temple.

But in as much as it was in your heart to build my temple, I give you credit for that. So although David didn't do, now contextually that's not dealing with this topic, you know that, right? But the principle still applies. That when God sees a heart set on doing the right thing, biblically, regardless of the spouse, regardless of their circumstance, he blesses and honors that.

That's the hope in the midst of all this. If somebody says, listen, Shane, I married somebody who, I mean, how many marriages are the result of adultery? I know six couples right now who they left their spouse

and they're married now to the person they had the affair with. Talk about being outside the will of God, but you can still offer hope.

If both those people got on their face before God and repented and said, Lord, this was not of you in the beginning. We've got children. Lord, we give everything to you.

We repent of that sin. We acknowledge you. There's hope for the hurting.

See, it all goes back to the cross. It wasn't just some sins were paid on the cross. All sins were paid on the cross, but we have to acknowledge it and say, Lord, I might be wrong in this area.

I might be in this relationship the wrong way. We've been caught in premarital sex. We've been caught in pornography.

The Christian couples I talk to now who view pornography together, it's like, what's going on here? Well, it helps things. Well, it shouldn't. That doesn't help things because he's not thinking of you, and neither is she, and it breaks down the marriage.

It's not healthy whatsoever, so you repent of these things. You get rid of these things, and you look to God and God alone and let him cleanse the heart. See, that's why there's great hope.

There's great hope from the adulterer, the adulteress, the marriage that people are married in. It's all kids brought together, and we were in sin. You bring it to the cross.

You bring it to Christ. Let him rebuild all of that. See, you can fall back into God's arms of safety and forgiveness and shelter in the matter of a second by repenting and getting back on track.

You can't change where you've been, but you change where you're going, and the heart can change, and that's hope in this message. No matter the situation, look to him and look to him alone.

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