

# When A Spouse Departs, Can I Remarry

by Shane Idleman

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**Scripture:** Matthew 5:31, 1 Corinthians 7:15, Psalms 2:12, James 5:16, John 14:6

**Topics:** "Marriage", "Seeking God's Guidance"

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## Description

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## Transcript

It's been a hard week because I've been processing this topic, and the title is, When a Spouse Departs, Can I Remarry? And all the singles are going, oh no, why am I here? Well, it's good you're here, because marriage is the most important decision you can make other than accepting God and embracing Christ, His gift on the cross, and repenting of your sin. It is a very important choice. It will affect the rest of your life in many ways.

So I'm going to speak to the singles, of course, because God's word is relevant, but I want to talk about a difficult subject, When a Spouse Departs, Can I Remarry? We get calls on this topic, I get emails on this topic, and many of you know in the news, I'm not going to say her name, but a high-profile political figure just announced their separation. Their husband, I think, was filing for divorce, a Christian couple, and the reason is this, incompatibility of temperament between the parties, such that they find it impossible to live together as husband and wife. Incompatibility of temperament between the parties, such as that they find impossible to live together as husband and wife, and on one hand, you want to say, welcome to marriage, but on the other hand, you don't want to dismiss difficult marriages, and that's why this is so difficult of a topic, because there are thousands of different scenarios, many different things going on in the home.

Some people are blessed, some people are struggling, some people are barely holding on, some are really strong, and how do you relate to all those different areas? The only way I know to do that is through the teaching of God's Word, and letting Him show you what it has to say, not my opinion, not what I think, but what does God's Word say? The sad thing about this split up that's in the news is the secular press eats this kind of stuff up, don't they? Oh, Christian couple, you're a hypocrite, and she used to fight for marriage, and now look at their marriages ending, and another well-known ministry a while back, the husband left them, and they were reconciled. It's on the radio, you can hear that, so it's really happening all over, but what I want to tell the secular media or the naysayers is this, you try fighting a battle every single day of your life, and never see if you mess up. You try.

It's a battle. Every day is a struggle for marriage, or a struggle to keep fighting the good fight of faith, or to standing in truth, and to not give up. It's a fight, and they need to stop calling them hypocrites.

What they are is they're struggling. They're struggling in sin. Maybe the husband's drifted and doesn't know what he wants.

He's hit a midlife crisis. You ever been there? Where you're like, oh, I'm getting old, and life is, I'm on the other side of that, and you start to, and maybe that person begins to drift, and then they walk away from their marriage, and then, oh, see, you're a hypocrite. No, he could be struggling, so we have to be very gentle in this area.

In case you're wondering, a hypocrite is someone who intentionally deceives, or they put on a mask. In other words, I come here on Sunday, and I'm this, and this, and then on Monday, I don't care what you think. I'm going to change into this other person.

I'm a hypocrite. I'm changing a mask to suit an audience, so people who struggle or fall back in sin are often not hypocrites, although they are. Jesus actually called the religious leaders of his day hypocrites.

You whitewash tombs. Oh, you look so great on the outside, but inside, you're like dead men's bones, so it's a topic you have to be very careful in, and grace does not mean that we soften the truth, and believe it or not, you might find this hard to believe if you've listened to my sermons. People have the audacity to say, sometimes, Shane, you give people too much grace, but grace doesn't mean you soften the truth.

It means you hold the truth, but with a broken heart. Grace understands, if it wasn't for the grace of God, there go I. That marriage and divorce, that could be us. That could be you.

Who are we to start judging and holding our head high and having this kind of arrogant Pharisee attitude on others, but at the same time, we hold to the truth. We don't compromise it, but there needs to be a lot of grace, and have you ever been in a difficult marriage? Don't raise your hand. You might be right now.

Many times, we know what to do. It's the doing it that's the hard part, and we need that softness from God, but we also sometimes need the hammer of God. We need to crush pride and crush hypocrisy, and sometimes a man who is neglecting his family needs a good right hook, not physically, but with the hammer of God.

Is not my word like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? God says, is not my word like a fire that devours that pride and that arrogance? I mean, God's not talking about a physical hammer and real fire, necessarily. He's talking about how that relates to the human heart. His heart, His word is like a fire and a hammer, and I told you last week, if you weren't here last week, you have to get the CD on your way out

because this is really part two.

There is a big divide in the Christian community between some they would call fundamentals or ultra-conservatives or just different theological beliefs, and that side would say that the only way you can remarry is if your spouse dies. That's it. End of story.

But what about when Jesus said, except for fornication, and they would interpret that word to mean if you get married and you find out later that your spouse was not a virgin, then you have grounds for divorce like they did in the Old Testament. I don't see that. That's what we call a quantum leap, but there is one side, a big side of Christianity that would believe that, that you cannot remarry unless your spouse dies, and you are disqualified from leadership for the rest of your life.

For example, I could not be a pastor in the Assemblies of God denomination and other denominations because of what happened in my 20s, which I find ironic. You can kill somebody in your 20s. You can come out of homosexuality in your 20s.

You can be a drunkard and a lascivious, and every sin in the book, and if you come out of that and you come to Christ, and now you can be a pastor, but because you have the big D on your forehead in your 20s, now you can't. To me, it doesn't make any sense. That's actually what God used to break me, to humble me, and to say, okay, Shane Eidelman, I'm breaking you this time in your life.

And if you need to hear more of that story, you can hear that in part one. I can share maybe my testimony at some point, but that's really the point I'm trying to make is we really do people a disservice if we're not careful in this area. There's one Christian leader who I look up to, I respect, but I disagree with in this area.

One pastor wrote to him. He said, one of my congregants has been hurt and traumatized and destabilized by the reading of this pastor's position paper on divorce. The vast majority of evangelical pastors and scholars would characterize her divorce as tragic, but biblically justified.

Her husband was a serial and unrepentant adulterer. She sought reconciliation for years, pursued counseling, accountability, church discipline, and pretty much anything she could have done, but it didn't work. Her husband was not willing to give up his sin, and the marriage ended.

It was the first time as a pastor that I've ever advised someone to get a divorce. But this position of Christianity would say, no, too bad, you got to stick with it. You got to stick it out.

You got to just, come on, sister, go through it, get through it. Now in that, there is some good advice as far as you do fight for reconciliation. You do stick with it sometimes when the times get tough.

You do fight that battle. Sometimes God might have you praying for months or years. So there is some truth in that, but we have to be careful that we don't just handle all situations in the same light, because there are different circumstances, different situations.

The truth doesn't change. Scripture is pretty clear on what is allowed and what's not allowed, and that's what we're going to discuss this morning that we didn't discuss last week. But here's what we talked about last week.

1 Corinthians 7:15. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

So to me that seems pretty clear, but apparently to others it doesn't. They try to, the way they try to twist Scripture to fit theology is amazing sometimes. So if there's an unbeliever, they depart, let him depart.

If a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. So here's a big question. When to hold on, when to move on? Can you answer that anyone? When do I hold on or when do I move on? And the sad news today is I can't give you that answer.

I can only point you to the one who has that answer and biblical principles. It would be foolish for you to listen to anyone about advice on your marriage and allowing that person to lead your decision. Because often that person's view can be biased.

It can be skewed. They don't know what's going on in the other person's heart. They don't know what's going on in your heart.

And anytime we tell our side of the story, don't we kind of change a little bit so we don't look as bad? And so you have to take it to the one who knows all things, knows the heart. I mean early in my ministry, I was for sure, well that's going to end in divorce. I mean there's no, and then guess what? They get back married again.

They stood by it. But when there's physical abuse, have you ever been in an angry home? It's not fun, it's difficult. There's physical abuse, there's emotional abuse, there's mental abuse.

There could be hitting things and children in danger and there's a lot to this. That's why some advice I would give one couple, hey you know based on what you're telling me, I would stick through it, work it out, get some counseling. Some other, somebody else, the same thing, but with children or something, I'd say hey I think it's good to separate and get some help.

You need to break away from that very dangerous and toxic environment. So see how it's not a, you know, one size fits all approach? What about if your husband is now incarcerated for the rest of his life? Well can I remarry? I can't answer those. I mean biblically speaking, I'm going to get to the answer in a minute.

But let me talk about this. Fifteen, but if the unbeliever departs, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage.

Well if you look, you can just look at the original language if you want, it means to be bound to. So if somebody departs, you're no longer bound to them, you're no longer a slave to them, you're no longer carrying the weight of that relationship. That's what it means.

Because why? God wants us to be in peace. Now you shouldn't be excited that they're leaving because sometimes with scripture we look for loopholes instead of anchors. I've seen many scriptures where the husband's gone and the next day she's quoting this.

When did he leave you? Yesterday. I'm applying this right now. The cashier at Trader Joe's looks a little attractive and I've been talking to him.

Hey look, he departed yesterday or a week ago or a month ago. I mean this is, when somebody departs, there's a process of praying and waiting. God what do you want to do? What do you do in his heart? I'm not in a hurry, I'm waiting on you.

But depart means to separate from themselves from something. So Paul's saying if an unbeliever, now what about if a believer departs? Monkey wrench into the scriptures, but we're going to get to that in a minute. Monkey wrench.

So departs means separates himself. So here's the picture. There's an unbeliever who leaves the marriage, says I am out of here, I'm done with you, don't ever talk to me again.

I don't know what I was thinking. I knew what I was feeling, but what was I thinking? Dierks Bentley fans, I still have never seen the song or the video, but somebody said that and it really stuck out in my mind. I knew what I was thinking, but what was I feeling or vice versa? And they just leave, they're gone.

What do you do? Now the Christian, the spirit-filled Christian should be praying for reconciliation and restoration and that God yanks that person out of darkness and changes them. That should be the focus of our prayer, not on plan B. Not on the person we're attracted to at work. And that's how the enemy will work in this.

I've seen this destroy more marriages than anything else, not even a close second. There's not even a close second. Going through difficult times, the flesh's magnet is attracted to this person.

Now this person becomes a stumbling block to reconciliation. You should erase any type of plan for plan B out of your mind. There shouldn't be a person you're thinking about.

Maybe I wonder if God brought this person in my life. No, no, he probably didn't. The devil can, do you know the devil can bring people into your life too? The devil can just introduce Cinderella to the knight in shiny armor and then let affections play, but God opened a door.

Does the devil open doors? Well, that's true, but it's a pretty good thing. Was it a God thing? Well, they say they're a Christian. Are they? Are you still married? Are you still bound to that person? See, here's why it's difficult.

You've got spirit-filled believers sometimes contending for a marriage where the other person isn't filled with God's spirit. They're quenching and grieving the spirit. Or you have two carnal Christians, or you have one's an unbeliever, one's not.

If you get two spirit-filled believers loving God, loving His word, humbling themselves, it's going to be hard to break that apart. It just doesn't happen. You don't see that very much.

I mean, I don't personally know two people on fire for God that have have ended in divorce. Now I know it's out there. You don't need to email me.

I'm sure there's there. See, there's exceptions, but that does not negate the rule. Just because something happened doesn't mean, and there's always that draw to someone else.

If someone just waited on God and didn't didn't allow their flesh to direct them, you'd be surprised at what might happen in marriages and restoration. I don't want to tell too many testimonies in case people are listening now, but I don't think this couple is, but we have a friends of ours, I've told you this before, that got married the same time we did, go to a church, and I just ran into him. I'm like, what's going on? He said, oh, I'm engaged.

But they were separated. Now they're divorced. Now he's engaged already.

Like, what's wrong with your wife? And you have little kids. What happened there? You see, it's just that immediate draw to someone else or to something else. It can really be destructive.

So what does Jesus say on divorce? I think that's probably the most important thing, correct? Matthew 5.31 and 32. Now you really have to study this scripture in context. You have to look at, you know, you can look at Josephus, an early church historian, but you can look at the rabbis that were in Jesus's time at this particular junction.

What did they teach? You can look at early church fathers, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, and some of their writings on this. So you can kind of get a pretty good idea of what's going on. So Jesus said, it has been said, anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.

Basically, he must free her. Here's why. Before Moses, divorce was, and even in Moses's time, if the husband didn't want her anymore, guess what? Kick her to the curb.

That's where that term comes from. Maybe she could do that to him, probably. There was no consideration of anything.

And you're helping this, let's say you're the main supporter financially, you're taking care of this family, and you just kick her out. Where's she going to go? There's no money, there's no revenue, there's no resources. She's a victim of your choice.

And Jesus, we're going to read a little bit later, where Jesus said, because the hardness of your heart, God allowed divorce. But from the beginning, it was never so. So it's been said, whoever divorces his wife gives her a certificate of divorce.

He frees her. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Okay. Now remember, there's two sides of this. One side that says you cannot remarry unless someone dies, and they turn the Scripture around a little bit.

Or the clean, crisp reading of this, Jesus is saying, there's no grounds for biblical divorce except in the area of sexual immorality. Meaning, what God has designed, I guess we do a history lesson on this. God has designed the sexual union of man and woman to be the covenant, the binding contract, to become one flesh.

So when you break that covenant, and you give your heart or self to another, and you're breaking that covenant, this provision seems to say that there is grounds to divorce. There's grounds to separate from that person because they've already broken that commitment. So he's saying here the marriage was not properly dissolved.

It has to be properly dissolved through sexual morality. Jesus narrows the focus to unfaithfulness. It breaks the bond of marriage.

But then it comes up, what about lying, and manipulating, and abuse, and divisiveness, and all these other things? And he's abused my children, and all these terrible things. Well, you can't say, well, too bad. Read this.

Sexual morality only. So as a pastor, I'm careful. I don't advocate divorce.

I don't know if I've ever told you that. Please tell me and remind me. But I've never said, yep, just go for it.

Yep, take him to the bank, take him to the cleaners. My heart's always for reconciliation. God, Lord, what do you want to do in understanding the heart of God? See, that's the heart of God.

And I don't see the heart of God is allowing someone to stay in a very destructive, very abusive, very harmful home, especially for the children. That's really hard to push. Now, can you go get a divorce if there's not biblical grounds? If you don't have biblical grounds for the divorce, I would be leery of going out and filing for divorce right away.

I would seek God. There's no problem in separating. People get upset at this, too.

You're telling people separate. Yeah, if you're a jerk at home and you're not changing, she might need to go somewhere to wake you up. The biggest wake-up calls people have ever had is when there is separation.

They realize what they're about ready to lose. I didn't say divorce. Paul will go on to say, if you do leave, stay unmarried.

So if there's a difficult home, difficult things are going on, there is, I believe, biblical grounds that person can separate, get out of that environment. And many times when they get out of that environment, they begin to find freedom and wholeness, a deeper relationship with God, because they're out of the toxic, dangerous home. And then the other person wakes up and says, oh, I guess I am the problem.

I guess I'm about ready to lose this very important gift. Hopefully, hopefully. But usually what happens? What did we learn earlier? He hits the bar and plan two becomes a reality.

See, people think, oh, now we're separated. It means now I'm free. No, you're not.

No, you're not. How many people have met someone and said, well, I'm separated right now. We're going to get a divorce eventually.

Oh, okay. I can date you then. No, you can't.

If somebody is separated, allow that separation to drive them to the cross. Allow that separation to drive them to a deeper relationship with God and let God answer those questions. God can't direct you through his word.

God can't give you insight and wisdom. The problem is many times we're too much in a hurry. We want those answers now.

I know many of you are already thinking, what about this situation? What about this situation? What about this situation? But let me read a commentary here. Jesus appears to be saying that if a divorce is not legitimate, then the remarriage is not legitimate. Conversely, if the divorce is legitimate, then the remarriage is legitimate.

In the context of the day, the certificate of divorce was specifically given in order to permit and endorse a remarriage. So if someone gave them a certificate of divorce, they're saying you are free to marry someone else. I'm divorcing you.

And that's why Jesus is clarifying, except for this area of sexual immorality. And what really stands out to me is if we took the Bible a little more seriously, we might take dating a little more seriously. Or should I say dating the wrong person? We might not be so flippant about marriage.

If it's just, well, if it doesn't work out, it doesn't work out. And that's the approach nowadays, isn't it? Hey, if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. But the approach really should be, okay, Lord, are you leading me? Are you guiding me? Is this a person you have for me? I'm not going to rush into this.

Lord, I want to know that you are leading me in this area. And again, Matthew 19, Jesus said, because the hardness of your heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning, it was not so.

So in a nutshell, Jesus really only gives one out, doesn't he? In the area of sexual immorality. And the question comes up, what about pornography? Well, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he. If you even look at a woman who left for her, you've committed adultery.

If there's an ongoing issue with this, and the person is unrepentant, it's not much different than the physical act. But again, there's a lot of questions, and there's a person willing to change. There's so much.

It depends. You have to take it case by case. But I would say if there's a problem with this area, pornography, and he's unrepentant, it's not any different than actually committing the actual act of adultery.

But again, with all things with God, there's restoration, there's hope, there's renewal. Many of you listening and here today can testify to that, that you fought the fight, and you hung in there, and God worked it out. So Jesus only gives this out.

But notice that he's talking primarily to the person filing the divorce. He's going after the critical heart. He's going after the person that wants the divorce.

What about the victim who's left to pay the price of the choice of another? That has to be taken into consideration as well. So remarriage really is not the issue, in my opinion. Manipulation and abandonment are.

The remarriage doesn't come up too much, other than he's getting to the heart of the matter, which is manipulation and abandonment. So I appreciate the words of J. Nolan on this point. 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 rejected her at his whim. Boom. Victim.

One blow. And now she is barred from any new relationship because she bears the stigma of the divorce. So this person now is a double victim because of the choice of the other.

That's why you really have to look at what is the heart of God, and not just, you know, immediately quote scripture at someone without feeling their pain and understanding where they're coming from. A situation we know somebody, I believe around 20, 23, can you believe that? Very abusive home. Who knows? Pornography involved affairs.

We're not sure. Had to leave. Done.

Prayed. Contended. Went back home.

Went back home. Went back home. Still the abuse.

Still the physical abuse. And if he says, I'm done with you. I'm filing.

I'm moving on. And then now she's at 23. Just, that's it.

You can never remarry. You can never have any more kids. Take a vows of celibacy and put on your nun cap.

Again, I'm not minimizing scripture. I'm just saying you better be careful. Be very careful.

And what is the heart of God? Because we don't know if that gentleman was committing adultery. We don't know what the background is to that. So 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.

Amen? That's not what I'm saying. God hates divorce. Anyone who has been there knows why.

Here's why I try to find the balance. Because when we just take scripture and you just throw it at someone and you can't relate to them. You've never been through a challenging situation.

It's very, it doesn't sit well. It doesn't, you don't have that grace. It's like telling someone struggling with depression.

Oh, I'm just, I'm struggling right now. I'm thinking of taking my life. Read the Bible and get over it.

Now that's good advice. Read the Bible. Meditate on God's word.

But see, unless you've experienced it, you have to be careful. So what is the heart of God? What about the person now, well, I'm going to sum this up in a minute if you have some questions. But what about the person now that's saying, did I make a mistake? Or I made a mistake.

How often does that happen during preaching? We hear the word of God and we say, I've made a mistake. I've fallen. Well, let me encourage you.

Repent and repair what you can. Repent and repair what you can. As much as it depends upon you.

What can you do? What is God ministering in your own spirit? Divorce is not the impardonable sin. We sometimes think it is, don't we? Divorce is the impardonable sin. It's not.

Now, if somebody got, was divorced earlier and it wasn't biblical, you know, you have to be careful. You have to be careful with what you do with your life. You have to take it to God.

We have to repent. We have to acknowledge, God, I need your direction in this area. I need you to show me what to do, God, and go and repair what you can, if you can, if God's leading.

So seek God over the advice of others. Here's what you need to do. Prayer is your heartbeat right now.

Did you catch that? Seek God over the advice of others. Going to others will drive you insane. It's okay to get counsel now and then, but have you ever felt like a double-minded man? Unstable in all his ways because this person is, oh Lord, I don't know what to do.

I don't, don't do anything. Just wait. Wait on God.

Now there's people in the midst right now listening to this, in the midst of a divorce, or the divorce has already gone through, or that's the direction they're heading. I just encourage you, take it to God. Seek him.

Meditate on his word. Get it deep inside of you. God will lead those who are willing to follow, as long as what is not in your way? Plan B. How many people have Plan B? What's Plan B, Shane? You know what it is.

Plan B is, if this doesn't work out, here's where I'm going. Here's I'm running to. We're so craving of relationships.

We have to have someone. The rebound approach. Have you heard that before? As soon as somebody breaks up, they've got to find somebody else.

And that happens in divorce. You're separating like, oh, I'm lonely, and that's good to feel this way. I mean, that's legitimate, and I want that relationship.

And we begin to meet someone, and then now we start to draw away from restoration. And now if you have biblical grounds for divorce, and it didn't work out, and God is bringing you hope and peace in your life, you live on that. You seek him, and you allow him to direct you.

But we have to be careful here too, because many times, these Plan B's, they prevent reconciliation more than anything else. So in a nutshell, here's what I tell people, if you want to know. We'll save this CD for marriage counseling, and they can listen to this.

Everything I've said already, plus this. If the possibility of reconciliation still exists, fight for it and contend for it. If there's a possibility of reconciliation, fight for it and contend for it.

I can't say, well, it's beyond God's grasp. Go ahead and file for that divorce. But again, there's different situations.

What about if the person is just totally abusive, a lying, and a manipulator, and just, you name it, they are that person, that, ooh, you know who that is. And it's hard to pray for reconciliation, and we'll pray that God would save them. So I believe you fight and you contend for your marriage as long as you can, until God gives you clarity otherwise.

There's no harm in waiting, is there? The only harm in waiting is this, my biological clock is ticking. And I've been there, I know, I can relate. I mean, it's hard to just wait.

But there's no harm in waiting, but there is much harm in rushing. When people rush ahead, I don't want to be negative, but the statistics on second marriages are not better than first marriages. I could share quite a bit of stories with you over the years when we've told people the grass isn't greener, and we've heard from them.

We've heard from them that the grass is not greener. And now they're in their second marriage wanting out. What do you tell that person? I remember two came to mind, we've shared this one before, but it was a young woman, we just started the church, and she was going to leave her husband.

She did. She left her husband and two little kids. And it was an amazing statement I'll never forget.

She said, I know what the Bible says, but God just wants me to be happy. That's a very bad interpretation of scripture. Yes, God wants you to be filled with joy, joy filled.

Happiness is what's happening to you. But that is not the option. There wasn't biblical grounds that I was aware of.

Then we heard from her a few years later, miserable, upset, knew she made the wrong decision. Another lady, I think it was 2009, I'll never forget. I remember the desk I was sitting at, a friend of mine said she left me.

There's nothing I can do. Facebook, she met somebody on Facebook. Now, how often have we heard of that? That's the number one thing I've heard of.

See, the devil can make connections. Oh, I remember them in high school. I better go see how they're doing.

No, you better not. You don't need to see how they're doing. If you're attracted to that little picture, you don't need to see what they're doing.

See, connections. And then the devil can bring that back up again. But anyway, so I reached out to her.

This whole thing, the grass isn't greener. She's in her second marriage, miserable, but can't divorce him and go back to her first because the first is married. And the children were older, teenagers, but still traumatized, hurt.

How selfish sometimes. How our choices affect, deeply affect our children and our marriages. So there's no harm in waiting, no harm in rushing.

And that's why I was struggled with this message, because I know there's every situation listening just about. Somebody heading to divorce court. I know getting ready, their divorce is going to be final.

And then another couple whose divorce was final, friends of mine from high school, a month ago. Is there any hope in that? Yeah, there's hope. They're both still single.

Don't go to plan B. Don't go to plan B. And then others that are contemplating, others just holding on. And that's why maybe it frustrates people because there's not clear cut, do this, do this, do this. But I encourage people, seek God with all your heart.

He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. I've never known God. I love that song we sing, not once have you ever let me down.

Not once have you ever failed me. I failed myself, people have failed me, but not once has God by His sheer grace and mercy ever failed us. We fell ourselves or people fell us.

And so we're to look to Him and Him alone. So He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. What does diligently mean? It's that constant.

You ever hear the drip in your water faucet? It's not good, but it's good when you're pursuing God. That diligence, that not giving up and not giving in. He rewards us.

He will show the person. He might restore their marriage. He might renew the relationship with Himself.

He might give them insight and wisdom. If God is ministering restoration in your spirit, wait for it, contend for it, pray fervently for it. He might be doing that.

But sometimes we want to do what is right so bad that we may think that it's God and we get frustrated. But what about if the believer departs? How much time do we have? What if a believer departs because we do get that question? Well, a real believer, because there's some wolves in sheep's clothing. There's people that say it, but they don't live it.

But for the sake of this question, it's a real believer. It appears from Scripture that God's plan is for them to reconcile or remain single. To the married, I give the command.

Now, if the believer commits adultery, we've seen God heal many marriages where adultery occurred. It's not the unpardonable sin. Healing can take place.

But if it's a consistent, unrepentant sin of adultery, it just keeps years after year. That's who this person is. They're that scriptural course to end that marriage.

But what we don't see is somebody has an affair, and then the next day you run to the courthouse. See what God is doing there. Don't rush in that area as well.

So if a believer departs, Paul, we actually read this last week. I believe it's 1 Corinthians 7. I didn't put the chapter or verse. You might not even have it up there, but I'll just read it to you.

To the married, I give this command, not I but the Lord, a wife must not separate from her husband. You want to underline that? A wife must not separate from her husband, but if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

So that's pretty clear. He's writing to the church in Corinth. He's talking to believers.

But what's the number one reason that people begin to separate? I'm just not attracted to them anymore. I don't love them anymore. And they begin to drift away.

So what do we do in this case if a believer leaves? Well, Paul is putting out the command here that we're not to separate, but if a separation does occur, that during that time they are to remain unmarried. What's the purpose? Well, if both believers are remaining unmarried and separated, hopefully they can be praying for God's will because even though they're separated, they're not joined to another. They're not married to another.

They haven't broken their covenant. They haven't committed adultery. So a separation occurs.

How many people know that separation can be good if the right things happen during separation? If they take a break, get out of the toxic environment, they're just not getting along, they realize in their aloneness and their quietness and their singleness, if you want to call it that, they begin to seek God more fervently, then God can bring that back together even stronger. But again, the majority of the time that doesn't happen. They separate.

They think the word separation means divorce, and they meet someone else, and it falls apart. So it's an area you have to be very careful in. So I'm going to sum up last week and this week for you in this divorce in the case of adultery.

So it seems that the scripture does allow divorce in the case of adultery, marital unfaithfulness, pornography, including any type of that illicit type of sexual union with someone else that breaks the bonds of marriage. And then divorce, it seems, in the case of abandonment, when the unbeliever leaves. If there's an unbeliever, they depart.

They leave. They're not coming back. Again, don't rush to divorce.

Don't rush to find the next person. To me and people, how long do I have to wait? I have no clue. But I know it's not a week.

I know it's not a few months. When someone leaves, there's a significant amount of time that we need to be spent seeking God, waiting on what they do. If they decide to date someone else, and they're living with someone else, they're getting married to that other person, God might direct you with some peace on moving forward.

So again, it depends on the situation. But I would still pray for reconciliation. I pray for God that God would get their heart.

Some people feel convicted, and people have told me the shame. He's left, but I'm not dating again. I'm not marrying again.

And that's completely good and biblical, if God's put that in your heart. But again, go back to the story I have. You have a 24-year-old.

Again, age doesn't matter if it overrides Scripture. I'm just giving you scenarios. If you have a young person, their spouse leaves, and they're not coming back, they've abandoned them.

It seems to say here, through the writings of Paul, you can read 1 Corinthians 7 yourself, that there is divorce in the case of abandonment. But abandonment, it takes a while. Because many people leave, and they have a change of heart, don't they? I don't know what I was thinking.

God really spoke to me. Can we talk? How often have we heard that? God's restored marriages that way before. So that would be my advice, is not be in a hurry.

If somebody abandons you, it doesn't mean, oh good, now I can remarry. The heart should be waiting and getting direction from God. And then it seems to be their separation in the case of mental and physical abuse.

Mental, physical abuse, spiritual abuse. You would shed tears in this room if I shared some of the things that are going on in some families. My Lord, God help us.

And then some people say, well, no, you just got to stay there and put up with it. I don't agree with that. And then people say, well, Shane, you can't recommend divorce.

I'm not. I'm just saying, get out of that dangerous situation. Get out of that toxic environment.

Be able to seek God again. Some homes are ran like a prison. And there's nothing wrong with separating from that type of environment.

Unless you can show me some scripture that's very solid on this issue. I think that's why Paul said, if they depart, let them remain single, knowing that there would be some challenges ahead. Separation in the case of challenging marriages.

Oh Lord. That's pretty broad, isn't it? Whose marriage isn't challenging? If your marriage is not challenging, can you talk to us after the message? But again, what are those challenges? And I'm talking to people this month, it's very difficult. I don't have answers.

I mean, they are in some bad marriages. Let's leave it at that. That doesn't seem a way out.

It's frustrating. I'd be frustrating with them, especially when there's drugs or alcohol involved or medication. And the person is just not who they normally would be.

It's psychotic, a borderline. It's just, what do you do with this, Shane? Well, I know you don't run to plan B. I know you don't run to the advice from the world. I know you don't just be excited about getting out of the marriage.

I know you seek God. And there might be a time to just separate. Let us get our bearings again.

Let's just get away from each other and seek God. And that's the heart of God is reconciliation. That's his heart, I believe.

So I'm going to leave you with this. Hope for the hurting. Hope for the hurting.

We talked about last Wednesday. Get that CD as well. I talked about how a person is blessed.

Blessed is the man or woman who, what, meditates on God's word. Blessed is the man or woman who walk, if not of the counsel of the ungodly. So this might be a word for some of you this morning.

Where are you getting your advice from? Where? Huffington Post? CNN? Drudge Report? Hollywood? Inquire? It's tempting to grab that thing from the store, isn't it? What? 500 million dollar divorce? And you're in, where are we getting our influence from? We need to be getting back into God's word, having it change our hearts. Blessed is the man or woman who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. And this week I'm talking about a chapter two in Psalm on Wednesday, and I love this closing verse.

Blessed are all those who take refuge in him. Blessed are all those who take safety in Christ. Do you want to be blessed of God? Do you want your marriage to be more abundant? Do you want to be a better father, a better mom? You want to be blessed by the things of God? Then you better take refuge in him.

What is that? You're coming in from outside the storm. You're coming into his shelter and protection. But how, Shane? You become a worshiper.

Don't let worship be boring. Don't let the Bible be boring. Don't let prayer be boring.

Become a worshiper and a prayer warrior and getting back into God's word. But, Shane, I don't feel like it. Then you pray, God, make me feel like it.

God, make me feel like it. I want that. I want the fire of God.

I want the power and presence of God. A.W. Tozer said, or I don't want to have anything to do with religion. Amen? Too many people don't know the power and presence of God.

They're not taking refuge in Christ. They know about it intellectually. They think about, they'll consider, they'll go to church from time to time, but that's not taking refuge.

Refuge is you run to him. You run to him in the morning. You run to him in the evening.

Throughout the day, you're abiding in him. You're meditating in his word. Yes, though you fall, you will get up again because Christ will pull you up because he is your refuge.

He is your strength. He is your ever-present help in time of need. He is the one you call on at one in the morning.

He's the one you call instead of the psychologist or the counselor. He's the one you turn to when all hell breaks loose, not Xanax, Valium, and Vicodin. You turn to Christ and Christ alone.

That's the hope. Oh my, I could go off on that one for a while. Let me tell you how stubborn the human heart is and how open, unopen it is for correction.

Just when I say things like that, I get people emailing me long stories of why they should be on medication. I'm not saying there's not a time and place for it. Sounds like a conviction alert just went off in your head to have to justify why you're taking Xanax.

You might need it. There's serotonin uptake inhibitors that help serotonin levels. I got it.

But our nation is running to the medicine closet instead of the prayer closet. You can tweet that one. You can just write it down.

We are running to the medicine closet and not to the prayer closet. There might be a time and a place for that, but you don't run to it. You run to Christ and let him direct you.

Let him. Because a lot of those things, there's not complete hope in them. They are finding that majority of suicides are already on antidepressants.

Something that's supposed to take away the depression that's causing it. We could talk about the mass shootings. How many of those are on psychiatric drugs? I mean, we could just really take this in a whole new direction here.

But suffice it to say you have to take refuge in Christ. Oh Lord, help us. Let me just close with the power of prayer.

I want to encourage you. The power of prayer. Just this week, we prayed with two ladies.

I think one of them's here. Marilyn's here. My wife.

And we prayed for two prodigals specifically. And we prayed. And I got texts that day that God was working in their hearts.

Something is changing. They're like, can you believe this? I can't believe it. Wait a minute.

Why can't we believe this? This is the power of prayer. When God starts to move, we say, I can't believe this. It should be the opposite.

I know God's going to move. And I think as Christians with the authority of God's word, if you're a praying Christian, believing Christian on the promises of God, you can say, God, your word says this. And we're going to stand on it.

We're going to pray again. See, you need to get back to the prayer closet. Prayer is like a sledgehammer that hits a concrete wall one brick at a time.

Oh, your prodigal son, you're not home yet. But I'm hitting one brick at a time. One brick at a time.

Every morning, every evening, woe be the person who relies on a five-minute devotional as if that's going to come against the gates of hell. You need to pull out the weapons of your warfare. Paul describes the sword of the Spirit, the breastplate, the banner, the truth, the belt, the helm of salvation, all these things to go to war and go to battle.

We need to get back to a praying church. If I were you, I'd begin to remove things from your calendar that are pulling you away from God and begin to get that time in prayer. That's the only hope for our nation.

I am well aware that sermons, sermons are great. I love preaching sermons, but you're not motivated to prayer. And if you're not motivated to take action, it just fell on deaf ears and I wasted a lot of time.

Christians have to take action and become people of prayer. And then finally, I just have to throw this out. Are you an unbeliever? Do you truly not know God? I know you know about Him.

I'm running into a lot people these days that know about God. Oh yes, I know God. He's in everything.

Well, what do you mean by that? The one true and living God who sent His Son on the cross, who died for your sin, for my sin, that God. Be crystal clear on that God. Millions of AA meetings this morning are saying to the higher power, we acknowledge a higher power.

No, you have to acknowledge the one true and living God whose name is Jesus Christ. He's the way, the truth, the life. Nobody can come to the Father except through Him.

So I want to throw out that invitation. Do you truly know Him? Do you have a relationship with Him? Have you repented of your sin? Maybe that will repair your marriage. Oh, how many marriages have been repaired when a believer came to Christ or an unbeliever came to Christ? How long of a list is that? And so many people are trying.

I want my marriage to work. I don't want divorce. But if you're fighting against it,

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/1DIbMo6xkbl.mp4>

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