

Matt. 5:27  
Matt. 19:1-11

## DIVORCE

### INTRODUCTION:

1. THE WORLD NEEDS TO RECOGNIZE FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES IN MARRIAGE.
  - A. In Origin, it is Divine.
  - B. In Form, it is Monogamic.
  - C. In Obligations, it is Mutual.
  - D. In Spirit, it is Religious.
  - E. In Nature, it is indissoluble.
2. The following grounds are recognized in U. S. Courts as cause for divorce:
  - A. Impotence, adultery, desertion, conviction of a felony, unnatural behavior, habitual drunkenness, habitual use of drugs, idiocy or insanity, wife pregnant at the time of marriage, violent temper or behavior, husband and wife living apart, non-support by husband, extreme cruelty, where prior marriage exists, willful neglect, fraud, disappearance, under age of consent, divorce out of state by other party, mental incapacity, force or duress, venereal disease, attempt on life of other, indignities, husband's vagrancy, incompatibility, mental cruelty.

NOTE: Civil Courts Cannot Annul  
God's Law.

3. The rising divorce rate is one of the gravest problems of our day.

### I. WHAT IS THE TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ON THE SUBJECT OF DIVORCE?

- A. Gen. 2:23-24 - "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be jointed to his wife: and they shall become one flesh."

- B. The Old Testament priest could not marry a divorced woman.
1. Lev. 21:7 - "They shall not take a wife that is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband: for the priest is holy to his God."
  2. Lev. 21:14 - "A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot-- these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife."
- C. Who might be divorced?
1. Bought Wife. Ex. 21:7-10: "And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters."
    - (a) Condition: "Not Pleasing to Him"
  2. Captive Wife. Deut. 21:10-14: "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because he has humbled her."
    - (a) Condition: "No Delight In Her"
  3. Strange or Heathen Wife. Ezra 10:1-16: "Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam spoke up and said to Ezra, 'We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. Now

therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it.'

Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Lēvītes, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jēhōhānan the son of Elīashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity. And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem, and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the instructions of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the assembly of those from the captivity.

So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain. Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, 'You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.' Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, 'Yes! As you have said, so we must do. But there are many people; it is the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days, for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter. Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter.' Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support. Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers' households, were set apart by the fathers' households, each of them by name;

and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.”

(a) Condition: "Causing Idolatry"

4. Unclean Wife. Deut. 24:1-4: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for this is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.”

(a) Condition: "Uncleanness"

Note: The Hebrew word translated "uncleanness" in this passage is the word used for adultery in the following passages: Gen. 9:22-23; Exodus 20:26; Lamentations 1:8; Ezek. 16:36-37.

D. The man was required to give his divorced wife a writing of divorcement.

1. Deut. 24:1-4 - "When a man takes a wife, and marries her, and it happens that she find no favor in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her: and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her, and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.”

(1) We learn two things from this passage of scripture:

- (a) A writing of divorcement was to be given the divorced wife.

i. Isa. 50:1 Alludes to this: "Thus say she Lord, Where is the certificate of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, and for your transgressions your mother has been put away."

(b) The woman who remarried could not return to the first husband.

i. Jer. 3:1 Alludes to this: "They say, If a man divorces his wife, and she goes and becomes another man's, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted, but you have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to Me, says the Lord."

(2) John Murray in his book on Divorce says on this point:

"The bill of divorcement, we have good reason to believe, was mandatory in the case of dismissal. It served a variety of purposes. It was a legal document and therefore served as a deterrent of hasty action on the part of the husband - it would serve to restrain frivolous, thoughtless and rash dismissal. It would also be a testimonial to the woman of her freedom from marital obligations to the husband who sent her away. And it would be a protective instrument in the matter of the woman's reputation and well-being, particularly in the event that she married another man." (p. 9.)

E. The Jews during the time of Christ had made a mockery of marriage vows.

1. The School of Rabbi Hillel demanded a divorce on any flippant cause.
2. Josephus, the Jewish historian, divorced his wife who had borne him three children because he just got tired of her.

II. WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH CONCERNING DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE?

A. A PERSON MAY REMARRY IF THEIR MATE IS DEAD.

1. Romans 7:2-3 - "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man."
2. 1 Cor. 7:39 - "A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes; only in the Lord."
  - (a) Paul is apparently stating that Christian widows are to marry a man who is a Christian. It would seem that the same would be equally true of a widower who is a Christian.

B. IN THE SECOND PLACE: A PERSON MAY REMARRY IF THE MATE COMMITS ADULTERY.

1. Luke 16:18 - "Whoever divorces his wife, and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery."
2. Mark 10:2-12 - "The Pharisees came and asked Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' testing Him. And he answered and said to them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.' And in the house His disciples asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'"

3. Matthew 5:31-32 - "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commit adultery.'"
  
4. Matthew 19:3-9 - "The Pharisees also came to Him saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason? And He 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 a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.' They say to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to divorce your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."
  
5. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURES:
  - (a) Divorce is not mandatory in the case of adultery.
  - (b) A person may put their mate away for the cause of adultery only.
  - (c) A person may marry again after divorce if he or she is the innocent party.

NOTE: If an adulterous relationship was excused by God on the grounds of ignorance of His law; then to be consistent God would have to excuse all other sins of a moral nature. In addition to that, He would have to excuse all doctrinal errors if they were the result of ignorance. As a matter of fact, most of the doctrinal errors are a result of ignorance.

- (d) Unscriptural divorce and remarriage means:
  - (i) That both parties are living in adultery

- (ii) That their souls are in jeopardy of Hell
- (iii) Repentance means leaving that adulterous relationship

NOTE: Repentance means a change of mind or a change of attitude about sin. No man can ask God to forgive him of the sin of adultery which he is living in when at the same time he plans to continue living in that same adulterous relationship. He may be sorry for the condition in which he finds himself but he obviously has not changed his mind about it.

### III. THE EFFECTS OF DIVORCE CAN BE SEEN IN:

- A. Rising juvenile crime.
- B. Deserted wives and children.
- C. Children become mentally depressed.
- D. Deterioration of home life.
- E. Sexual promiscuity goes on the rampage.
- F. Children become torn between two parents.

"Daddy, when are you coming home again?" The words were spoken softly but with a desperate urgency. The father looked down at the young girl seated at his feet and, despite the anguish in his own heart, reassured her. He thought bitterly of the price being paid in terms of human loneliness and insecurity - the aftermath of a broken home. Since the divorce, the little girl had been placed in the custody of her mother. Multiply this picture in one way or another by degrees of human response and suffering some 388,000 times, and one has an idea of the problem." (Jack Bates, *Divorce, 20th Century Christian*.)

- G. The future happiness of all parties involved are affected.
  - 1. No one is completely the same after the ordeal of divorce. They have to admit that at least one, and perhaps both, have failed.

H. The folkways and mores of the nation are affected.

IV. WHAT WOULD THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE  
INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE MEAN?

- A. Mean an end to most, if not all, divorces.
- B. It would stabilize the social life of America.
- C. Mean that individual partners would have to work out their petty differences.
- D. The religious life of our nation would be stabilized.

V. WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH?

- A. Elders of the church are to teach the people.
- B. Preachers must preach the truth regularly on this subject.
- C. Parents must teach their children at home.
- D. Must emphasize right associations for our young people.
  - 1. Every date is a potential husband or wife.
    - (a) Choose your associates wisely and discreetly.
- E. Must encourage Christians to marry Christians.

VI. REAL TRUE LOVE GROWS STRONGER, DEEPER, AND MORE  
MEANINGFUL DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS.

- A. This is so beautifully expressed by Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her husband:

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
I love thee purely, and they turn from praise,  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a life I seemed to lose

With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death."

Most importantly, don't quiz your children about what takes place in the other parent's home. Your children love both of you, and feel a strong loyalty to each of you. When you question them about what happens in the other parent's home, they are likely to feel anxious and defensive and will avoid sharing information. Encourage your children to share what they want to, but avoid asking questions that raise stress levels and cause anxiety.

Stop and think about all aspects of your post-divorce behavior and its impact on your children. By putting your child's needs first, you can avoid conflicts that hurt your child, and you can support your child's healthy relationship with the other parent. If each parent takes the time and the responsibility to reduce conflict, you can encourage your children to develop a healthy adjustment to your divorce, and avoid the insecurities and traumas that some children of divorce experience.

***Conflicts Between Parents Are Likely to Cause:***

1. Tension, anxiety, and regression
2. Feelings of confusion and embarrassment
3. Feelings of responsibility and self-blame in your kids
4. Withdrawal or clinging behavior at transitions
5. Long-term emotional and behavioral wounds
6. Feelings of disillusionment, fear, insecurity, or vulnerability
7. Temper tantrums, school problems, or self-destructive behaviors

***You Can Ease Your Child's Transitions By:***

1. Promoting and supporting an atmosphere of cooperation and sharing with the other parent.
2. Periodically talking with your child about the schedule to see if she likes it.
3. Keeping the transfer of the children free of conflict.
4. Using your child's school or daycare as a buffer zone if you can't avoid conflict.

Even if you can sometimes parent cooperatively, you find it to be difficult and are in conflict too much of the time. Conflicting parenting is the worst for children, who are often in the middle of the conflicts. Your children will adjust to your divorce easier if you can avoid conflicted parenting. Psychological issues that lead to conflicted parenting are many and may include:

- continuation of hostility that began during the marriage;
- differing perceptions of pre-separation child-rearing roles;
- differing perceptions of post-separation child-rearing roles;
- differing perceptions of how to parent;
- concern about the adequacy of the other parent's parenting ability;
- an unwillingness of one or both parents to accept the end of the relationship;
- jealousy about a new partner in the other parent's life;
- contested child custody issues;
- personality factors in one or both parents that stimulate conflict.

It is important for you to be flexible. If you set up rigid rules for your child, you increase the possibility of a power struggle where there are no winners. By having a basic structure, in which the rules are clear and the expectations are understood, consequences will make sense. If your child tries to change the rules, negotiate (depending upon the age of the child) and see if it makes sense to be more flexible in your approach. If your child is willing to compromise, and you can be more flexible, it is possible to accomplish what you both want. This teaches your child that you're willing to talk out differences, attempt to resolve them, and find solutions that work for both of you.

Ultimately, it is best if you have an initial structure and reasonable rules in your house, along with a willingness to be flexible. These standards will allow you to teach responsibility to your children, while maintaining self-responsibility as parents.

## **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

Responsible parenting includes:

- acknowledging that you make mistakes as parents;
- ignoring invalid criticism from the other parent;
- communicating with your child about his feelings;
- paying attention to your own parenting and attempting to improve it;
- avoiding blame of the other parent;
- being a parent more than a friend.

Healthy discipline includes:

- maintaining reasonable rules and setting responsible limits;
- using natural consequences rather than punishments;
- teaching and modeling conflict resolution skills;
- encouraging healthy structures in your home;
- expressing your love to your child;
- avoiding your child's blackmail;
- remaining flexible and avoiding power struggles with your child.

### **Bill of Rights for Children Whose Parents Are Divorced**

Children have the right to:

- Know the truth about your divorce, with simple explanations!
- Be protected from the parental warfare!
- Develop and maintain an independent relationship with each parent!
- Be free from having to take sides with, defend, or denigrate either parent!
- Be free of responsibility for having caused the divorce!
- Be reassured that they are not to blame!
- Be free from having to take over parental responsibilities! A child can't become the "man of the house" or the "little mother"!

- Expect that both parents will follow through with the parenting plan and honor specific commitments for scheduled time with their child!
- Expect that both parents will inform each other about medical, dental, education and legal matters concerning the child!
- Receive love, guidance, patience, understanding, and limits from their parents!
- Spend time with each parent, regardless of financial support!
- Be financially supported by both parents, regardless of how much time is spent with their parent!
- Maintain privacy when talking to either parent on the telephone!
- Have a personal sleeping area and space for possessions in each parent's home!
- Participate in age-appropriate activities so long as those activities do not significantly impair their relationship with either parent!
- Avoid being told the painful details of their parents' legal proceedings!
- Avoid being made to feel guilty for loving both parents!
- Avoid making the custody/visitation decisions!
- Avoid being cross-examined by one parent after spending time with the other parent!
- Not to be used as a messenger or spy between the parents!
- Not to be asked to keep secrets from the other parent!

America's divorce rate is leading the world. If the trend continues, there will be one divorce from one marriage. More and more children are living in a one-parent home or in a home where they have a "new" mother or father. The trends are becoming clear that many of these children of Divorce will have to have help from grandparents to survive - at times to come to live with their grandparents. In every Divorce, everyone loses: the marriage partners - "dreams go up in smoke;" the children, both sets of grandparents, close relatives on both sides, friends, neighbors and churches.

America's children are paying the price for the sinful lives their parents have lived and are living. The two basic sins are pride and selfishness and in most divorces one or both of these sins are prevalent. Seldom are the rights - hope - needs of the children considered. One father told me, "to hell with them." Well, hell will not be too hot for fathers who do this to their precious children.

## WHAT CAUSES THE AMERICAN FAMILY TO DESTRUCT?

### 1. CHEATING:

So many of today's husbands and wives are products of the 1960's and 1970's. They grew up watching filthy movies and television - and the programs have grown more filthy. They watched the actors/actresses having sexual intercourse out of wedlock. Slowly but surely this seemed the thing to

do because "everyone is doing it." WELL, THANK GOD, MOST MEN AND WOMEN ARE NOT DOING IT. MOST MEN AND WOMEN ARE KEEPING THEIR MARRIAGE VOWS "UNTIL DEATH DO US PART."

## 2. ALCOHOL:

Sadly, drinking alcohol - whiskey, wine and beer - is taking a few generations down the road to ruin and destruction. It is exceedingly costly - money, that is. But it is one of the main causes of Divorce. About 65 percent of automobile accidents - causing injury or death - is alcohol related. One or both drivers were drinking. It gets worse by the year. Our Nation is freighted down with "children afraid for dad and mom to come home - half-drunk or drunk. Many a woman has had sexual relations while drunk - and would not have consented otherwise. There is an old saying: "candy is fine, but liquor is quicker," and it is.

## 3. DRUGS:

Millions of Americans are "hooked." Cocaine "fries the brain" and those "hooked" on it - and it doesn't take long - they live to get the next fix. Some "fixes" last an hour or two - some only minutes. Husbands, wives, teenagers will sell anything in the house to get "another fix." Then they begin to steal, to rob banks, break into homes and businesses, and a million other ways to get another "fix." Those who traffic in illegal drugs are the SCUM OF AMERICA. If you doubt this, talk to police officers, to parents and grandparents, to church leaders and others. It is one thing for a person to experiment - it is another thing for those who traffic in drugs and work unceasingly to get anyone "hooked." Our young people are paying a deadly price. It has to be stopped.

## 4. IRRESPONSIBILITY:

Tom Brokov, in *The Greatest Generation*, writes that the years he grew up in Dakota - he now lives in Montana - were wonderful years. Divorce was unheard of in his area. Women did not drink or smoke or "sleep around." Men did not drink - most of them did not and neither did they "sleep around." Most of the men went off to war and the women held down the homefront. The same men came home from the war, got jobs, bought houses, loved their wives and children and made this country great. A few of those men said to me recently, "Ralph, it ain't so now. God helps us to love America and turn back to God, our Bible and our churches."

We have reared us two generations who will tell you, "I am entitled" and "you are going to keep me up." Well, President Lyndon Johnson told millions while speaking on television that you are "Entitled" and "I am going to see that you get what is coming to you." Now, a girl-woman pregnant out of wedlock gets all kinds of Federal aid. Each additional child out of wedlock brings in more Federal funds. IT IS ENCOURAGING THE BREAKDOWN OF THE