

REASONS FOR THE HIGH DIVORCE RATE

Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. When I obeyed the gospel in the 1940s in a congregation of over 200 where I became a member there were no divorced people in the membership and no divorced and remarried people that we knew of.
2. At that time one could hardly find divorced people among society in general, especially among members of the Lord's church, even if one combed with a fine-toothed comb; now it has reached the point where you can rake them up with a hay rake in society in general, and all too prevalent among members of churches of Christ.
3. Divorce among all segments of our society has grown at an alarming rate and is still growing.
4. Since God **hates** divorce (Mal.2:16), it should indeed be rare among confessed followers of Jesus Christ.
 - a. However, such is not the case among Denominational churches in general which hardly frown upon it and whose churches are filled with the married, divorced and remarried with little or no thought as the scripturalness of it. (There are exception, of course.)
 - b. Although it is evil and should be abhorred (cf. Rom.12:9), it seems that divorce is more and more being tolerated by most, accepted readily by many, and even encouraged for various reasons by some.
 - c. More and more members of churches of Christ are divorcing without scriptural cause; they are also divorcing and marrying another without scriptural grounds.
 - (1) In many cases both parties in the divorce are claiming scriptural grounds for the divorce!
 - (2) Then both are claiming the right to marry another because of their claim of being scripturally divorced!
5. This is the case in spite of what Jesus and his apostles have repeatedly said about it in plain simple terms, Mt.5:32; 19:4-6,9; Mk.10:11,12; Lk.16:18; Rom.7:1-3; 1Cor.7:10-13,39; Heb.13:4.
6. In view of these inspired texts, the only person who has a scriptural right to divorce his or her spouse is the person who puts away his or her spouse for the cause of fornication, whether or not they ever marry another!

- a. Furthermore, the fornication which is the scriptural cause for putting away a guilty spouse is fornication that is committed before the divorce.
 - b. That innocent party who puts away the guilty party for the cause of fornication and the party whose spouse is dead are the only persons who have the right to marry another! Mt.19:9; Rom.7:2,3; 1Cor.7:39.
7. In spite of this, divorce for any and every cause is practiced by both unbelievers and professed believers.
9. Why is this the case? This is the burden of our lesson. In this study we shall examine some of the reasons for the high divorce rate – even among professed believers, and even more sad, among members of churches of Christ, i.e., God’s children.

II. DISCUSSION

A. IT IS NOT BECAUSE PEOPLE IN GENERAL, CERTAINLY NOT GOD’S CHILDREN, CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE.

- 1. We noted the plainness of what the Bible repeatedly says about it in a previous lesson on “Marriage As God Ordained It”, and in the scriptures cited in our introduction to this study.
- 2. Moreover, the inspired text teaches that we can understand God’s will for man.
 - a. Eph.5:17; 3:1-5; Jno.8:31,32.
 - b. Psa.119:104,105,130; 19:7,8,11; 119:11.
 - c. Mt.7:21-27; Heb.5:8,9.
 - d. 1Cor.4:6; 1Pet.4:11; Rev.22:18,19.
 - e. 2Tim.2:15.

B. WITHOUT A DOUBT, VARIOUS WORLDLY, EVIL INFLUENCES CONTRIBUTE TO THE HIGH DIVORCE RATE, SUCH AS:

- 1. Television designed to appeal to the flesh upon which people, both unbelievers and professed believers, feed.
 - a. Marital infidelity and divorce for any and every cause are portrayed on popular soap operas and other popular nightly television series as being proper, right and wholesome, as well as desirable, even as problem-solvers for troubled marriages.

- b. These programs encourage role changes of men and women and are designed to get the viewers, which, unfortunately, include professed Christians, to relate to and sympathize with such worldly practices.
 - c. With a TV in every room in so many homes parents don't know what the kids are watching – what is influencing them!
 - d. To our shame they have had phenomenal success in promoting their evil views and practices – thus adding to the divorce rate.
 - e. Professed Christians, in spite of warnings of the dangers in watching and filling their minds with such evil trash, nevertheless do it to their own detriment.
 - f. Consider Prov.4:23; 23:7; Phil.4:8; 1Cor.9:27; 10:12; 15:33.
2. Most modern movies have the same undesirable appeal to the flesh as do the Television Soap Operas and Nightly Series and thus also contribute to the high divorce rate.
- a. Most modern movies shown in the theaters, as well as those sold for VCR, DVD, viewing, are written by and produced by atheistic, immoral people who have absolutely no concern whatsoever for marriage as God ordained it.
 - b. These ungodly writers, immoral producers, actors and actresses often boast in one way or another of their having illicit affairs, children out of wedlock, unholy life-styles, etc.
 - c. These wicked people, often married, divorced and remarried multiple times, are often set forth by society as highly successful, rich, fulfilled, happy individuals, and as “role models.”
 - d. Such life-styles preach “if it feels good do it;” “do your own thing;” “it's no body's business.”
 - e. Such entertainment mediums even glamorize divorce!
3. The Women's Liberation Movement also has contributed to the problem and become another reason for the prevalence of divorce.
- a. This movement has become part and parcel of the efforts to destroy marriage and the family unit as God ordained it, thus promoting divorce.
 - b. This movement encourages women to ignore their God-given role of Scriptural submission and subjection, or “rulers of the household” (1Tim.5:14), and to be more assertive, self-sufficient, independent, masculine (even in looks, dress and actions) and thus have “fulfillment.”
 - c. This movement is having great success in convincing women that they can't be truly happy, be useful in society, and have

“fulfillment” unless they leave the “boredom” of the home (with its lowly, inferior, demeaning, debasing, undignified, useless, responsibilities) and get out into the “real world” – get into the “work force” of the world and have a “career.”

- (1) It even ridicules the idea of being a lowly house-wife, or mere home-maker-mother!
 - (2) Of course, we are not saying the Bible condemns a women working outside the home.
 - (3) But we are saying it does condemn doing so at the expense of or to the neglect of her duties as “guide (ruler) of the house”.
 - (4) Look what has happened to the home, the family and society in general since women left the home in such great numbers and joined the “work force” to the neglect of the home!
 - (a) “Latch-key kids” “Unsupervised kids” “Kids turned over to baby sitters – to the schools – to the neighborhoods – to the streets – to the television – to the juvenile authorities, etc.
 - (b) Later to the drug pushers – to the prisons.
 - (c) You can almost put your finger on the very time when this began to happen in such great number – that is, when the women left the home in such great numbers to join the “work force” to gain “fulfillment”
- d. The Women’s Liberation Movement has succeeded, whether intentional or not, in fomenting so much discontent and dissatisfaction among women.
 - e. This movement must be responsible for a giant portion of the blame for the present-day idea of so many, which is this: If a woman cannot do as she pleases with her husband, she is encouraged to divorce him!
4. Over emphasis on material things is a another contributing factor to the high rate of divorce.
- a. Such emphasis brings about financial problems because they demand more and more money. And financial problems often contribute to the divorce problem.
 - b. Such over emphasis on material things has cause husbands to have to work longer hours in order to provide them, even to the neglect of the family.

- c. It has made more and more families think it “necessary” for the wife and mother to leave the home and join the “work force” in order to provide such “necessities” – and that often times to the neglect of her duty to “guide or rule of the house” as God requires (1Tim.5:14).
 - d. Such situations often increases tension at home and places more strain on the marriage relationship.
 - e. It also may bring about added tempting situations between men and women because of close working relationships on the job.
 - f. Questions to be considered by each family are these:
 - (1) Is the financial need in the family so great that such an arrangement is necessary, or merely thought to be because of an over emphasis on material things?
 - (2) Are more and better “material things” really worth the risk involved and the price that must be paid in strain on the family, including the children, as well as the husband and wife relationship, if the wife leaves the home for outside employment?
 - g. It is for more important to give self to each other in marriage; to give our children more of our time in teaching and training by working and playing with them than to give them more and better things at the expense of self, and of teaching and training.
 - (1) It is too easy to try to substitute the giving of things for self.
 - (2) Before you know it, if not careful, the children are grown, and you have spent less time with them than their baby-sitter, or their school teacher, or some undesirable person or source of some kind.
 - (3) In which case, whose values do you think influence them the most? Yours or someone else?
 - h. Remember 1Tim.6:6-11; Heb.13:5; Mt.6:19-21 when it comes to the material things!
5. The failure of so many to enter marriage accepting it as a permanent bond between a man a woman and God – a “till-death-do-us-part” bond is another reason for the high divorce rate.
- a. Mt.19:4-6; Rom.7:1-3,39. This leaves no doubt that it’s a “till-death-do-us-part” bond.
 - b. If it is a Scriptural marriage, then the two are joined together by God, and only God can give permission to sever that bond, which he has done only on one condition, Mt.19:9.

- c. If it is not a scriptural marriage, it is an adulterous relationship – a continuous adulterous relationship – and should never have been entered in the first place.
 - d. Unless marriage is viewed as God ordained it, one has little or no problem treating it as a temporary arrangement to be ended by divorce if it “doesn’t work out” according to one’s wish.
- 6. The loose morality, the doctrine of situation ethics, and or the concept that there is no such thing as absolute truth, of our day are others reasons for the high divorce rate because such ideas deceive people into thinking they can do as they please.
- 7. No fear of God, a lack of faith in God, and or a lack of true, genuine commitment to one’s profession of fear of and faith in God is another reason for the rising divorce rate.
 - a. The one who truly fears God and is genuinely committed to God and his word does not profess one thing and practice another.
 - (1) That one does not genuinely profess to believe God hates divorce;
 - (2) He does not genuinely profess to believe that God allows divorce for one cause and one cause only;
 - (3) He does not genuinely profess to believe that God ordained marriage as a permanent relationship;
 - (4) He does not genuinely profess to believe all of this and then divorce at will!
 - b. There were those of O.T. days who professed a fear of God and faith in God, but who were not genuinely committed to their profession.
 - c. Likewise, there are those today, even among churches of Christ, who contribute to the high divorce rate and for the same reason – mere profession, but a lack of commitment!

III. CONCLUSION

1. We have mentioned a number of un-justified reasons for the high divorce rate in our day.
 - a. Divorce for such reasons does not solve one’s problems.
 - b. It certainly does not please God.
 - c. It usually brings about more problems.
 - d. It always results in sin, condemnation, and loss of souls.
2. Of course there is one justifiable reason for divorce, and even that is on the rise because of loose morals, a failure to fear God and lack of genuine commitment to God. (Credit to Carrol Sutton, The Instructor, Vol.28,1991)