

Divorce

Introduction:

- A. Divorce is a devastating problem in our country. - 1986 US divorce rate: 48% (Statistical Abstract of the US, 1988)
- B. This problem long ago invaded the Lord's church.
 - 1. churches filled with divorced people, many unscripturally so
 - 2. division over divorce
- C. The response of many preachers and elders is woefully inadequate.
 - 1. pop psychology
 - 2. positive Christianity
 - 3. unscriptural theories
- D. What does the Lord teach about divorce?

I. Background

- A. God's original plan for marriage was that one man and one woman live together as husband and wife throughout life. - Genesis 2:21-24
 - 1. This is not:
 - a. fusing of two bodies or
 - b. loss of personal identity.
 - 2. It is:
 - a. close and intimate union and
 - b. permanent bond upon the basis of mutual agreement and sexual union.
- B. The Law of Moses relaxed God's original plan. - Deuteronomy 24:1-4
 - 1. Moses allowed divorce for loss of favor because of "some uncleanness."
 - a. This was:
 - (1) "shame, filthiness, anything unclean... any defect found in a woman..."
Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius. 653.)
 - (2) "The words suggest some immodest exposure or failure in proper womanly reserve"
(Cambridge Bible Commentary)
 - b. This was NOT fornication. - Deuteronomy 22:22
 - 2. This was because of the hardness of their hearts. - Matthew 19:7-8
 - 3. But God still hated divorce. - Malachi 2:13-16

II. The Law of Christ Concerning the Permanence of the marriage Tie

- A. The general law concerning marriage is: only death should separate the partners. (When the marriage is terminated for any reason other than death, at least one person sins.)
 - 1. Matthew 19:3-6
 - 2. Mark 10:3-9
 - 3. Romans 7:2

4. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

- a. The passage does not allow separation without remarriage.
 - (1) This would contradict the other passages. - cf. John 17:17
 - (2) It would violate the wedding vows. - Ephesians 4:25
 - (3) It is a tacit admission that sin is present.
 - (4) It violates the rule concerning separation in this very context. - 1 Corinthians 7:2-5
 - (5) It places upon the partner the temptation to commit adultery. - Matthew 5:31-32; 18:6-7
 - (6) The one doing the separating will almost assuredly remarry. - 1 Corinthians 7:5
- b. The passage specifically forbids both the husband and the wife to separate.
- c. The “But ... if” clause does not allow separation, but shows how to handle a sinful situation. - cf. 1 John 2:1
- d. If possible they should reconcile (the fruits of repentance). - cf. Matthew 3:8
- e. If this is impossible, they must “remain unmarried.”

5. 1 Corinthians 7:39

- B. There is one exception to the general law. (And this involves sin on the part of one mate.)
The innocent party may divorce the guilty party for the cause of fornication.- Matthew 5:31-32
 - 1. “fornication”: “sexual immorality” (NKJV)
 - a. “of illicit sexual intercourse in general” (Thayer. 532)
 - b. “of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse” (Arndt & Gingrich. 699)
 - 2. Fornication on the part of one’s mate must actually be the cause of the putting away, not an after-the-fact excuse for remarriage.

Conclusion:

God has ordained but three institutions: the home, the civil state, and the church. Of these three, the home is the most ancient. Furthermore, the family is, to a large extent, the basis of the latter two. The home is the building-block of any nation. When a nation's families are strong, that country has real strength; when its homes dissolve, the nation decays. The young people who will determine the future of the Lord's church in this country will largely succeed or fail on the basis of the type of home in which they were reared. If divorce kills the American family, how long can our nation or the Lord's church in this country last? Pray God if perhaps America, especially God’s people in this beloved land, may wake up before it is too late!