**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage**

What was once a scandalous disgrace is now commonplace. Divorce, in our modern society, has become as acceptable a practice as marriage. The attitude of our culture on divorce and remarriage can be summed up in the following statements:

“We can get married and if it doesn’t work out we can always get a divorce.”

“If you are unhappy in your marriage, life is too short to remain in an unhappy relationship. Get out and start over.”

“I just don’t love him anymore. He no longer makes me happy. Surely the Lord doesn’t expect me to stay in a relationship that makes me unhappy.”

Concerning divorce and remarriage our culture in general holds the view that one may divorce for whatever reasons and as long as one has obtained a legal divorce that person may remarry. But is this “no-fault” divorce mentality of our present day really what God intended for us? This is the focus of our lesson today. What does the Bible teach concerning divorce and remarriage?

Perhaps there is no clearer passage in the New Testament that states God’s will regarding divorce and remarriage than the statements made by Jesus in Matthew chapter 19. In verse 3 we read that the Pharisees came to Jesus and asked Him, *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”* Jesus answers the question by going back to the very beginning when God made man and woman and instituted marriage. He said, *“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.”* (verses 4-6). Jesus’ teaching on marriage is based on what God instituted at the beginning. Jesus quotes from two passages from Genesis chapter 1 and 2. He quotes from Gen. 1:27 where it says that God made them male and female and then He quotes from Gen. 2:24 *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* From these two statements Jesus draws two conclusions: number one – God is the one that joins husband and wife together. And number two: what God joins together man is not to separate.

And so first of all, God joins them together. Marriage is a joining together of a man and a woman by God. This is what God ordained at the very beginning. Marriage is not an institution that originated with man, and therefore, he can tweak it and change it as he desires. No! Marriage is a God-ordained institution. God is the one who joins man and wife together. And so He is the One who regulates it.

Malachi 2:14 calls marriage a covenant. God says to the man, *“she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”* Marriage then is a binding agreement between a man and a woman. Proverbs 2:17 calls marriage a “covenant of God.” In other words the covenant into which the husband and wife enters is an agreement to which God is a witness and to which God holds them bound. God ordained marriage and God joins the two together. Marriage is covenant of God. And God ordained marriage to be for life, “until death do us part.” Paul says in 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.”* This passage says that the husband and wife are bound for life by law, that is God’s law. Paul did not say that a woman is bound to her husband for as long as they continue to love each other, or for as long as there are no irreconcilable differences. He did not say that she is bound to her husband for as long as they are happy in the marriage, or for as long as they remain married to each other, BUT he said, for as long as he lives. Marriage is for life. Marriage is ordained by God, and when a man and a woman marries, God joins them together, they enter into a covenant of God and by God’s law they are bound for life.

But what about divorce? What did Jesus say here in Matthew 19? Remember He is asked the question, *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”* His response is, “*So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”* Therefore,Jesus’ view of divorce is, man separating what God has joined together. He says let no man do that. Divorce is covenant-breaking with one’s mate and with God. Since marriage is a covenant of God, a covenant to which God holds us bound, to get a divorce is to break that covenant. God does not view lightly covenant breakers. Covenant-breakers are listed among the sins of the Gentiles in Romans 1:31. Malachi 2:16 says that God hates divorce.

Now, there is one scriptural exception for divorce. In Matthew 19:9 Jesus says, *“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.”* According to this passage one has a scriptural right to divorce his or her mate if the mate has become guilty of sexual immorality. Sexual immorality is unlawful sexual relations. If one’s mate has sexual relations with someone else, then he has the scriptural right to divorce that mate for that reason. Divorce is sinful, unless one divorces his mate for the cause of sexual immorality.

What about remarriage? The Lord allows only two persons to remarry with His approval: one whose mate has died (as we read earlier in Romans 7:2-3), and one who divorces his mate for the cause of sexual immorality (as we read in Matthew 19:9). These passages tell us that anyone else who remarries, other than these two, commit adultery. Jesus said, “*whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”*

And this adultery continues throughout the duration of the second marriage, and as long as the first mate is living. Some people teach that adultery is committed only once when the couple first marries, but thereafter the relationship is not adulterous, and therefore, not sin. But this is not true. You remember in Romans 7 Paul said that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, and if she remarries while he is alive, she is an adulteress. And so she is an adulteress in this second marriage as long as her first husband lives. In Mark 6:17 we read that Herod had married is brother Philip’s wife. John the Baptist said to Herod, *“It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.”* (v. 18) John is saying to Herod that it is wrong for him to continue to have his brother’s wife. In other words, Herod needed to get out of this marriage because it was adultery.

This is a “hard saying” for many in our society. In our culture happiness for the individual is the premium as to what determines whether one divorces and remarries. The view is “life is too short to remain in an unhappy relationship.” “If you are unhappy in your marriage, get out and start over.” Those who believe in God rationalize by saying “I know God wants me to be happy.”

But the problem is that happiness is defined on their own terms. Happiness is defined as what gives them pleasure, how they feel and what they want. Before one declares what “God wants” for him in a particular situation, he would do well to first discover what “God said” about it.

It is true that God wants us to be happy, but we must define happiness by His terms. God provides us with true happiness, but it is a happiness that comes, not from having preferred circumstances, but from having a right relationship with Him. The Lord tells us in His word who are the truly happy people. The word “blessed” is used in scripture. It means “happy,” “fortunate.” Look with me at a few passages of scripture. Psalm 1:1-2, *“Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.”* Who is the blessed, happy, fortunate man? It is the man who doesn’t listen to the ungodly, but rather he delights in the law of the Lord, and in that law he meditates day and night. Look at Psalm 32:1-2, *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.”* Happy is he whose sins are forgiven. Look at Psalm 34:8, *“Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”*  Luke 11:28, Jesus said, *“More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”* In Matthew 5:6, Jesus said, *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”* These passages are telling us that the blessed, happy man is the one who puts his trust in the Lord. Happy is the one who hears the word of God and keeps it. Happy is the one whose sins are forgiven and has a relationship with God and has the hope of living with the Lord in heaven for an eternity. You see, happiness comes from a relationship with God, not from having our circumstances in life just as we would like them to be.

A person may not have the scriptural right to remarry, and have to remain celibate for the rest of his life, but he can be happy, truly happy in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Our culture teaches us that you may divorce and remarry for whatever reasons you choose, and do whatever makes you happy, but Jesus, our Lord teaches us that if we want to be truly happy we need to listen to Him, not our culture.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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