

Why You Should Not Divorce

We live in a day of “throw-away” marriages. Although there is some disagreement about the actual divorce rate in the U.S., all surveys either say half of all marriages now end up in divorce or the statistics are not that high but will soon escalate to this reality if the trend continues. One sad reason the divorce rate seems to have gone down lately is because more couples are living together in sin without being married; therefore a slight drop has been registered according to some pundits.

I love my work. Other than seeing someone receive Christ as personal Savior, nothing thrills me more in counseling than seeing a marriage “on the rocks” become established on “The Rock” and is rescued. If, however, there is one aspect of my work I do not enjoy and gives me greatest angst is when I witness couples give up on marriage and decide to call it quits. So many bad things follow this kind of decision such as, a walk with God is destroyed, church activity and attendance often falls off, an escape to a non-biblically based church is ensued and a root of bitterness grows and is often inculcated into the lives of their children.

With the Lord’s help and over three decades of observation in pastoring the same church, I would like to share with you four reasons not to get divorced.

1. God demands us to stay married.

This is a big “first-of-all” reason to stay married, because God says so! We find these dogmatic words of Jesus, *“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:4-6). Some will use the “exception” clause in Matthew 19:19 to defend divorce, however, every word of God should be examined when dealing with something so controversial and the word in the exception is “fornication” not adultery. In the context of the entire canon of Scripture we see the word fornication is almost exclusively associated with sexual activity of the unmarried while adultery is sexual activity among one or more married persons. In the Old Testament the penalty for adultery (not fornication) was death. Keep in mind, Joseph was not formally married to Mary and while they were yet betrothed, he sought to “put her away” when she was discovered to be with child (Matthew 1:19). So we see the world in which Jesus lived “putting away” was an act also committed by betrothed people as well as married. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke no “exception” is mentioned, Jesus said, *“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery”* (Luke 16:18). *“And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery”* (Mark 10:11,12).

Some may ask, when then may I be free from my vow? The answer is given in Scripture: *“For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man”* (Romans 7: 2, 3).

2. You became one flesh.

Science has said something chemically and physiologically happens when a man and woman join. Quoting the principle from Genesis, Jesus re-affirmed, *“And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh”* (Mark 10:8). To use the term “a marriage is torn apart” when referring to divorce is not hyperbole; you are stating a matter of fact! A marriage dispute is the most disturbing altercation in existence because it is not “you against them” but rather “you against you.” You are fighting against yourself because you have become one! Paul said, *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself”* (Ephesians 5:28). The Bible says, *“...a threefold cord is not quickly broken”* (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Here are the three things that bind a husband and wife: 1. the law of the land (Romans 13:1) 2. the wedding bed (Hebrews 13:4) 3. the vow you made to God (Ecclesiastes 5:5,6). Nobody made you vow. If you decide to break your vow, God will not hold you guiltless. In holy covenant, God makes you one flesh.

3. The next person you marry will be a sinner.

We are forbidden to put away our spouse, even if they are an unbeliever. The Bible says, *“And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him”* (I Corinthians 7:13). God is encouraging the believing spouse to use this as an opportunity for evangelistic enterprise: *“For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”* (I Corinthians 7:16).

Many believe they will be happy if they find mister or misses “Perfect.” That is not going to happen. We often jump from the frying pan into the fire. You take your baggage from a wrecked marriage and he or she takes their baggage and together in a second or third marriage you often have multiplied your problems rather than decreasing your problems. You don’t have to take my word on that, please observe these statistics: According to Jennifer Baker of the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology in Springfield, Missouri, The divorce rate in America for first marriage, verses second or third marriage: 50% percent of first marriages, 67% of second and 74% of third marriages end in divorce. There is some disagreement on percentages according to Enrichment Journal on the divorce rate in America: the divorce rate in America for first marriage is 41%, of second marriages is 60% and of third marriages is 73%. Although the numbers are not the same, the ratio comparison is virtually the same. The likelihood of a life being healed by second or third marriages doesn’t increase; contrariwise, the chances are measurably slimmer in your success rate.

Rather than giving up on your marriage, ask God to help you and your spouse to work through your problems. Don't keep your problems and carry them with you into the next union.

4. It is best for the children if you remain married.

In talking to my fellow pastors and counselors that I have met and read after, we all agree: kids do better when spouses stay married. Children I talk to hate it when their parents divorce. Only the parents have told me how much "better" it will be for the children. You may think that, the kids don't! Another cruel, cold truth about children of divorcees is that they blame it on themselves. Many children of divorced parents are still haunted in their adult years that they caused their mom and dad's divorce. Although they are mistaken, this is a reality to them.

I know it is not the best reason to stay together for the children's sake, but it will do until you develop a lasting love for each other. It is also a fallacy to think the unbelieving or carnal spouse will out-influence the believing parent for the Bible says, *"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy"* (I Corinthians 7:14). This verse teaches the promised influence you will have over your unbelieving spouse and safety for your children in an unequal union.

If we obey God, He will work for us. No marriage is beyond recovery: *"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"* (Ephesians 3:20). God can restore any marriage. His promise is: *"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten..."* (Joel 2:25). Stay married and let the restoration commence.

Let today be the start of a happily ever after!

-Pastor Pope-