

***Question: We've not been married very long, but already things are not going well. Did we make a mistake? Is it wrong to divorce? What would Jesus do?***

One time some Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" He answered: "At the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore *what God has joined together, let no one separate*" [italics mine-RY] (Matthew 19:4-6). Not content with this answer, the Pharisees asked: "Why then did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" (Matthew 19:7). Jesus explained that Moses as a prophet of God had permitted divorce only because of the hardness in their hearts. However, this was not the way God had planned it from the beginning. He intended that a man and woman marry for life. Jesus then added: "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

Although these teachings of Jesus seem rather straightforward, they are not always easy to apply. Yet, I do believe that Jesus had the best interest of each of us in his heart. The stability of society depends on the strength and stability of marriage and the home. This is why God rebuked his people of old who were breaking faith with their spouses. To them he simply said, "I hate divorce" (Malachi 2:16). Because marriage vows are made in the presence of God and other witnesses, we should do everything possible to keep those promises and never give up easily.

Our modern experience with marriage and divorce testifies to the wisdom of God's appeal to avoid divorce if at all possible. For example, when we first marry, the excitement and passion run high. Then the routine and stresses of ordinary life set in. Children may also come along. It is normal for any relationship to lose some of its luster at that point. Some individuals panic and think they made a mistake, so they get a divorce. Upon finding another mate, they enter a new marriage with great joy and hope. But the same routine stresses dull the excitement and passion again. This process is frequently repeated. But, those who persevere

through these stresses often find that their love and passion eventually increase to a level higher than it had been at the beginning of their marriage. This may also explain why many people who divorce later regret it and wish they had tried just a little harder.

However, if even one of the couple desires to try to save the marriage, he or she does have some options. Don't wait until the problems seem too great and separation is inevitable. Begin talking with one another about what is happening. Avoidance is more dangerous than any consequences from confrontation in love. Go to a marriage retreat. Seek out a competent marriage counselor that both of you trust. Talk about and revisit the places and things that ignited your relationship in the beginning. In his book, *LOVE LIFE FOR EVERY MARRIED COUPLE*, Dr. Ed Wheat says that it is possible for one person to hold on to hope and to rescue the marriage.

Jesus has not demanded the impossible from us without first providing for our needs. As our creator, he knows us and our world better than we; therefore, it makes sense to follow his instructions for life including marriage. Trust in God's wisdom and pray for his help. Satan and the unbelieving world will work against you, so you still may not save your marriage. But you will at least know that you made every honest effort to follow the Lord's word. If with this effort failure still comes, don't despair. Our God of grace can still redeem you and your hope for happiness with or without marriage.

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12<sup>th</sup>, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: [www.nchrist.org](http://www.nchrist.org) ]      2012/07/13