

## Divorce & Remarriage – Mt 19:1-9; 1 Cor 7:10-16; Mal 2:13-16

Turn with me to Mt 19:1-9 – it's the first of 3 passages that we're going to look at re D&R  
Mt 19; 1 Cor 7; Mal 2 – 3 passages that contain the bulk of what God says about D&R in Bible

Huge issues in our culture today – that beg for clarity . . .

And about which we tend to close our ears when we hear something we don't like, or don't want to admit, or don't want to do

So I want to start with an overview of each passage, beginning with Mt 19 . . .

And then come back and identify 5 Principles to live by

But before I do, let's *pray* and prepare our hearts to receive the truth

Starting with **Mt 19:1-9**, it says . . .

1 – *these sayings* – about forgiveness or the lack thereof in the previous chapter

Which I don't think was random

That Jesus spoke to us about forgiveness right before D&R

6 – Who's the man that he's talking about? The husband and wife in the marriage

And he says – don't separate what God has joined

7 – *a certificate of divorce* was needed under the OT Law, in order for the woman to be able to remarry

8 – IOW divorce was a concession under the OT Law, in order to protect women from the abuse of hard-hearted, rebellious men, who couldn't forgive, and didn't want to do marriage God's way

*But from the beginning, it was not so* – divorce is never what God intends, then or now

9 – here we find one of the two reasons for a biblical divorce . . . *sexual immorality*

A term covering grievous sexual sin or sexual misconduct of any sort – *including* adultery and marital unfaithfulness (*porneia* in Gr)

It's one of two reasons you can separate what God has joined

Does this mean that I can divorce for any reason and be okay, as long as I don't remarry?

No; That would take you right back to the "any cause" way of the Pharisees . . .

The very thing he's trying to correct here

He simply links remarriage w/ divorce b/c that was the expected norm in the Jewish culture

So whether you do or don't remarry, if you divorce for any reason other than adultery, according to this passage, you sin

You're acting contrary to God's intent – that's the point

### 1 Cor 7:10-16

10a – *not I, but the Lord* – meaning that these are the words of Jesus, directly

11 – First of all, Paul is speaking to believers here

We know that b/c he never gives charges of godly conduct to unbelievers

And in v12 he says – *to the rest*, and addresses mixed marriages where one spouse is a believer and the other isn't, in contrast to those in v11

So in speaking to believers he says first of all – stay married; don't *separate/divorce*

Using those two words interchangeably in this passage

And that's his main point in these two verses – don't divorce your spouse

But if u've already disobeyed that command, then remain unmarried or be reconciled – remarry them

12a – *I, not the Lord* – meaning, this is not a direct quote from Jesus, but an application of his teaching that I'm giving to give as one who is trustworthy (25) . . .

And one who's under the inspiration of the HS (40)

None of which diminishes the force of what he's saying, or somehow makes it optional

12-13 – being unequally yoked is not grounds for divorce, no matter how uncomfortable it might be

14 – the word here for *made holy* doesn't necessarily mean moral purity

Which is good; Otherwise we'd have quite a conundrum

B/c the force of Scripture is that we come to Christ individually, and are declared righteous on the basis of our *own* faith, not that of others

You can't ride someone else's coattails into heaven – it doesn't work that way

Rather, the word *made holy*, as used in this context, implies that an unbeliever in a family of at least one follower of Christ . . .

Stands to be influenced for the *good*, when it comes to the things of God

They have a firsthand opp to see Christ modeled, to learn the truth, and to make a decision for him that others don't have

So God says – if they want to stay with you, stay with them

You *will* influence them toward holiness; toward being set apart by God

But it's not a certainty, as indicated by v16

16 – you don't; so don't try to hold on to them if they *don't* want to stay

That's what he says in the intervening verse – v15

If the unbelieving wife/husband wants to stay w/ u, wants to remain married – great, stick with them; But . . . (v15a)

15a – *is not enslaved* – you're no longer bound to the marriage and the marriage vows

You're free – free to remarry

B/c *God has called you to peace* (15b)

IOW he has not called you to the endless strife and stress of trying to preserve a marriage with an unbeliever who doesn't want to be married

So here in 1 Cor 7, we find a 2<sup>nd</sup> reason for a biblical divorce – abandonment by an unbeliever

Though it's never intended, it *is* acceptable in God's eyes

### Mal 2:13-16

13 – *And this second thing you do* – not only do you marry unbelievers and continue to worship like nothing has happened (that's what he covers in v10-12) . . .

But here's another way that you're offending/grieving God (13b)

13b – You're moaning and groaning and whining b/c God rejects your disingenuous worship, and withholds his blessing from you (14a)

14 – *Why does he not?* – Why does he not accept our worship and sacrifice? (14b)

God is rejecting your worship and withholding his blessing b/c you're flaking out on the vows you made – your marriage covenant

The sacred, three-way, unconditional promise of life-long commitment between you, your spouse, and God

You've broken it, God says, and I'm not going to act like it hasn't happened . . .

Like everything's hunky-dory

Why? B/c he's a part of it (v15a)

15a – God not only joined you together (*made you one*), but joined *with* you in your union via his *Spirit* (v15b)

15b – *godly offspring* – more followers; more worshippers (15c-16a)

16a – *covers his garment with violence* – heaps all kinds of trouble on himself

This is a graphic image, most likely referring to the blood-stained garment of a person sacrificing an animal *unnecessarily* . . .

That is, without remorse for his own sin; Without a repentant heart

To do so was not a sacrifice, but a needless killing

An act of *violence* that left an unnecessary splattering of blood and blood-guilt, all over the person

It literally covered his garment with violence

And God is saying that to illegitimately divorce your spouse, is to cover your life, the garment of your soul, with trouble and violence

Like strife and emotional pain and depression and loss, and on and on

The person who hates and divorces wraps themselves in terrible trouble (16b)

You cannot snub your nose at God's intent, and expect him to be okay with it

He will not listen to your prayers (Ps 66:18)

He will not accept your worship; And he will not bless your life

So let me try to tie all this together in **5 Principles** (re divorce and remarriage)

**1. God intends for your marriage to last a lifetime**

Malachi preached it

Calling it a *covenant*; That God put together . . .

And remains a part of; To keep it that way

Which is why he says – *let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth*. (15b)

Jesus said it (Mt 19:6b)

That God joins us together

And that what he joins together, we should not separate (Mt 19:6)

Mal preached it, Jesus said it, and God designed it that way (Mt 19:8)

It was never his intent that a husband and wife should divorce

That they should split up, separate, or end their one-flesh union

From creation onward, God's intent was to come together and stay together

Anything else was a concession to protect wives from abusive husbands

But from the beginning, that's not the way God intended it

## 2. God strongly warns against divorce

Saying that it's sin

**Mk 10:11-12** – *Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.*

Not only is it sin b/c it's contrary to God's design, but it could also lead to adultery if you remarry – which is contrary to the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment

God strongly warns against divorce by saying that it's sin

And by saying that it only heaps trouble on yourself . . .

As we saw from Mal 2:16 – *the man who hates and divorces . . . covers his garment with violence*

That's why he ends that Malachi passage by saying *guard yourselves in your spirit* two different times

Against a calloused or complacent attitude toward your spouse (Eph 5:22-33)

Against a bitter root of hatred toward them (Heb 12:15)

Against the lust of your flesh for someone else – real or imaginary (Mt 5:27-30)

Against a hard heart and the deceitfulness that follows (Heb 3:12-14)

Guard yourselves against those things, b/c the alternative is trouble

Marriages are like gardens – left to themselves, they'll eventually be *over-run* w/ weeds

But if cultivated and tended and guarded, they will grow and flourish and bear fruit

So if you're going to stay married, you must take an *active* role in guarding your heart

B/c God strongly warns against divorce

## 3. God allows for divorce in only two cases

Though it's always God's intent that two people stay married, even if they're unequally yoked (1 Cor 7:12-13) . . .

He does *allow* for divorce in the two cases of adultery and abandonment

The latter of which is easily determined when they *leave* the marriage or the home, with no intent of coming back

There's very little question there, and very little to talk about or do

We're *commanded* to let them go (1 Cor 7:15)

But that's not the only form that abandonment can take – it can also be characterized by – Physical abuse

Or, prolonged emotional abuse – without any times of peace or genuine expressions of love in between

Or a lack of physical, financial, and emotional oneness

The problem w/ making a judgment call based on *those* forms of abandonment, is discerning their heart

Are they just a sinful, miserable unbeliever, who has good intentions but poor self-control?

Or are they a pride-less leach who has no better place to go?

In those cases, when the unbeliever is still around, abandonment is a difficult judgment call . . .

B/c 1 Cor 7:13 is pretty clear – *If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.* (and vice versa)

The question is – Are they really willing to live with you, or are they just using you, or trying to get you to leave?

If the latter is true, then it's quite possible you've been abandoned . . .  
And therefore have biblical grounds for divorce

But even if you have grounds . . .

#### **4. Divorce should be pursued reluctantly, if at all**

Not only is that the gist of these passages, but that's the example of God himself

As you read through the OT, it seems that the Israelites were more rebellious than they were holy

And yet God showed amazing patience and amazing restraint on multiple occasions, over long periods of time

Why? B/c he was reluctant to break covenant with them

He made a promise, and didn't *want* a divorce – it was a last resort

In fact, when they turned to him in brokenness and godly sorrow, he forgave them

The same thing he does now

If you have grounds for divorce – pursue it reluctantly, eager to forgive, and only as a last resort

And make sure you have the help of others in making the decision

You should never, ever be making this decision alone

**Prov 11:14** – *Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.*

- I've already seen more poor decisions made re divorce, than I care to remember  
Most of the time b/c they made a unilateral decision – all by themselves

You're the *last* one to be objective in this situation, and you need help

So set aside your pride and seek out people who will tell you what the *Bible* says

People who know the Word and love you

Unfortunately, far too many avoid such counsel b/c they're afraid of what they might hear, or they know good and well what the Bible says, and don't *want* to hear it  
All recipes for disaster

If divorce is to be pursued at all, it should be pursued reluctantly and with a broken heart, eager to forgive at the first sign of genuine repentance

Not just remorse for having been caught, but repentance – godly sorrow and a change of behavior

#### **5. Remarriage is allowed only if the divorce is biblical**

Other than the death of a spouse, a biblical divorce is the only allowance God makes for remarriage

- But what if your divorce has already happened, and it *wasn't* biblical? What now?

First of all– confess your sin to God, and ask him to forgive you  
And when you do, rest in the assurance that he will, and does

Second – seek godly counsel and the guidance of your church; b/c . . .

Third – you need to confess your part in the divorce, to your former spouse, and ask *them* to forgive you

That's the only way to *be at peace with one another* as Jesus says (Mk 9:50)

Fourth – you can either remain unmarried according to 1 Cor 7:11 . . .

Or, if *both* of you are still unmarried, try to reconcile

B/c if u weren't divorced for biblical reasons, then you're still married in God's eyes

Otherwise, why would it be adultery to remarry as we saw in Mk 10?

Either remain unmarried, or try to reconcile – that's the best picture of Christ/church

- But what if you divorced un-biblically and *already* remarried?  
Once again, confess your sin to God on both accounts – your unbiblical divorce *and* your unbiblical remarriage  
And then do the same with your former spouse – I'd recommend a letter and not a face to face, since you're already remarried  
And finally, do so with your current spouse – tell them you're sorry for making them a party to adultery, and for possibly giving up some of God's blessing in your life  
Once done, press on in your current marriage and don't look back – you're forgiven

- What if you divorced for unbiblical reasons, and want to remarry someone *else*?  
Press stop, and fast – b/c in God's eyes you can't  
*Unless* you try to reconcile your first marriage, and they want nothing to do with you  
If that's the case, given much time/honest effort on your part – you're free to remarry  
But you must try – that is the right thing to do according to the Scriptures  
And there's no way you can honestly do so if you're dating someone else

**(Summary slide)**

5 Principles to live by when it comes to D&R

And depending on your situation, I hope you're . . .

Convinced of the truth; Comforted by his grace; And . . .

Committed to doing whatever it takes to honor God in all this