

Lessons in Divorce and Remarriage

Discussion Questions:

(Summary) – As Jesus got closer to Jerusalem, He began to encounter more of the religious leaders who asked him controversial questions designed to trip Him up and catch Him in His words. This text is an instance of this. They ask Jesus a question about divorce, and we learn important lessons about the nature of divorce and remarriage in His answer.

(Point 1) – Jesus explained that divorce is regulated and controlled in the OT. It is by no means encouraged. He pointed out that the religious leaders' debate over divorce revealed that they had missed the whole point of the OT teaching on it.

- Do you ever find yourself reading into the scriptures the things you want them to say rather than what they actually say? Do you have any examples of this? What are some safeguards you have in place to prevent yourself from doing this?
- The OT regulates some pretty awful practices in the OT (e.g., slavery, polygamy). Though it's true that God protected the oppressed through these regulations, why did He not go further and ban them entirely? Is not the regulation of slavery tacit approval of it, even if the regulations are designed to promote humane treatment of the enslaved? How do you answer such questions when asked by skeptics?

(Point 2) – Jesus also explained that marriage was permanent. That is to say, divorce was never part of God's original design. We are hardwired by God to bond physically, emotionally and spiritually with our spouse; thus, a mere legal document cannot spare us from the emotional and spiritual consequences of divorce.

- Have you even been divorced? Have you ever been close to someone going through a divorce? What was it like for you/them? Have you observed/experienced divorce to be an "easy" thing? Or is it always a traumatic experience? Why?
- Promiscuity (prior to settling down in marriage) is a pretty accepted thing in our culture. However, according to Paul, the act of sleeping with someone (even someone we barely know, like a prostitute) triggers aspects of a marital bond which bring serious spiritual consequences (1 Corinthians 6:16). In what ways might the promiscuity of our culture be negatively affecting our ability to function in marriage today?

(Point 3) – Lastly, Jesus explained to His disciples (following the encounter with the Pharisees) that remarriage is adultery. That is to say, those who (carelessly) jump from one marriage to another are adulterers regardless of the fact that they are staying within the letter of the legal system. With this in mind, both divorce and remarriage should be pursued with the upmost degree of caution and care.

- What are your views on divorce and remarriage? Are they restrictive or flexible? Have they changed over time or have they remained the same? Why?
- Have you witnessed abuse through the overly harsh application of the marital commitment? Describe?
- Have you witnessed spiritual harm through the overly negligent application of the marital commitment? Describe?