

VALUE YOUR VOWS!

I. INTRO:

- A. **Marriage** (*Mawwage*) - 9 out of 10 people will get married. A large % of these marriages will end in divorce. Those who remarry $\frac{2}{3}$ will end in divorce.
1. **Pollster Louis Harris** has written, "The idea that 1/2 of American marriages are doomed is one of the most specious pieces of statistical nonsense ever perpetuated in modern times." It all began when the Census Bureau noted that during one year, there were **2.4 million marriages** and **1.2 million divorces**. Someone did the math w/o calculating the **54 million marriages already in existence**, and presto, a ridiculous but quotable statistic was born. Harris concludes, "Only **1 out of 8** marriages will end in divorce. In any single year, only about 2 percent of existing marriages will break up."¹
 2. **A divorce reform movement** took place in the **early 1970s** in *Great Britain & the U.S.* The movement proposed a single, **no-fault** (*blame is assigned to neither party*) ground that required a judge to grant divorce if he or she finds that the marriage is **irretrievably broken**.
 - a) States offering no-fault divorce in **1957: 1**
States offering no-fault divorce in **1995: 50**
 - b) What this country needs is more, *No-Fault Marriages!* (*blame is assigned to neither party*)
 3. This generation has "*The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*". (a secular book title)
 - a) **A 25 yr landmark study**. We have an entire generation of young Americans raised in divorced families. Concerns on getting married. Fears of being able to stay together with someone.
 4. Marriage is tough. It's not easy being married. It's not easy being married to me. **Why are we surprised what happens when 2 sinners marry?**
 5. Those who **live together** before marriage, separate and divorce in significantly greater numbers than those who go directly to the altar.
- B. Today there are married couples sitting here **or** listening in **with** the plan of **breaking up**.
1. **It might be for many different reasons**: Opps, I married the wrong person; Incompatibility; we shouldn't have gotten married to begin with; **or**, we only got married because she was pregnant; I've fallen out of love; my spouse has changed; I've found someone that understands me. And the list goes on.
- C. Others, already have been through the agony of **divorce(s)**.
1. Yet some boast that their divorces **went great!** - "*There wasn't fighting, we agreed on everything & it all went fine.*" [Give me 10 minutes with your kids & we'll see!]

¹ J. Allan Petersen in Better Families. "To Verify," Leadership.

D. We have talked about the **Purity** of marriage, now we'll talk about the **Permanence** of marriage!

1. "For better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, through sickness or health, while we wait for the promise of His coming or until **death** do us part!"
 - a) And **Until death do we part** means natural causes! It doesn't mean you get to take them out! *Thou shall not murder is still in there.*

E. **Outline: God The Father** on Divorce; **Jesus** on Divorce; **Paul** on Divorce.

II. **GOD THE FATHER ON DIVORCE!** (See **Malachi 2:13-16**)

A. Let's start with God the Fathers heart on the matter.

1. A marriage covenant involves the husband, the wife & God.
2. We expect God to be faithful... Why do we think we have the privilege of **not** keeping our promises?

B. (13a) The Lord heard the crying from the divorced women.

C. (13b) The Lord didn't heed the offerings from the husbands.

D. (14a) **The Lord has been witness** – He is witness to our marriage covenant.

1. **Note:** not a **contract** but a **covenant**(sp.).
 - a) *Thats why we have witnesses at weddings* (both earthly & heavenly)
2. **A Covenant** is an agreement made in trust.
3. **A Contract** is an agreement made on distrust/suspicion.
4. In a **Covenant** the parties love each other and put *no limits* on their own responsibility.
5. In a **Contract** the parties do not trust each other, and they set "limits" to their own responsibility.
6. **Covenant** can't be broken if new circumstances occur.
7. **Contract** can be voided by mutual consent.
 - a) Many say, "Love keeps a marriage alive"... **Wrong!** - **Marriage** keeps love alive!
 - (1) Remember, **love** **isn't** just a *feeling* it is a **verb, action**, it's **doing**.

E. (14b) **Treacherously** – *broke faith, unfaithful*. Willful betrayal of fidelity, confidence, or trust.

F. (16a) "For the **LORD** God of Israel says That He hates divorce!"

1. And thus says so many families that have gone through it!
2. **He hates divorce** – **not**, *I hate the divorced!*
 - a) We should be happy He hates divorce *otherwise* we'd have been divorced **from Him** long ago!

b) He hates **drunkenness**, he hates **lewdness**, he hates them *for what they produce!*...Ruined lives, loss of faithfulness, collapse of hopes!

G. Many have said, *"I just want it to be over!"* - But...IT NEVER IS!

1. It's not over it just gets really complicated. You still have a life together; you still have the past life together; maybe children together (which still means seeing each other, dealing with which days, holidays, dropping off kids, etc)

H. (16b) **Covering your garment w/violence?** = This reference is to *an old custom* of putting a garment over a woman *to claim her as wife*. (we cover their finger w/a ring)

1. **Instead of** spreading their garment to **protect** their wives; **they** covered their garment **w/violence toward** their wives.

III. **JESUS ON DIVORCE! (10,11)**

A. 1st note: *"yet not I but the Lord"*(10), then *"I, not the Lord"*(11).

1. In (10,11) Paul was simply *paraphrasing Jesus' teaching* on the subject (Mark:3-12)
 2. In (12-16) Paul is teaching, by Inspiration & Apostolic authority, via the H.S. (*i.e. a topic Jesus never taught on*)

B. (11) **Remain unmarried** - Now there's a hard doctrine!

1. **Is this for real? Yes!**

2. The disciples of Jesus thought this was a *"hard saying!"* [**Read** Mt.19:7-12]

C. Before I forget to mention it, during the 6 months it takes for a divorce to be final...you are **100% married!**

1. If you **do not have** the **"Certificate of divorcement"** (6 x's in Scrip.) you **cannot & should not**...be dating, flirting, clubbing, scoping your top 5 pics on Eharmony.com; **as you are still married!**

D. **Depart** – To separate.

1. The *modern idea* of separation as "something less than divorce" was totally unknown in those days. – Wherever (χωρίζω) appears in the N.T. in connection w/ divorce, it always refers to **separation by divorce**.

E. **3 steps to Divorce:**

1. The Bill was written & served; The wife had been sent off; The 2 are now "separated" by the process.

F. I think the *"modern idea of separation"* is so popular or accepted today is because it's often the attitude *"well at least we're not divorced!"*

1. **Fishing Analogy** – In marriage you’ve landed the fish, “he’s on the boat”. **Or**, if you’re biblically divorced you’re “**released** back to the sea”. **Modern Separation** is like keeping the fish hooked, & releasing the fish to the end of the line, & playing the fish in the water, dancing it on its tail.
 - a) Every counselor knows, **the way to put people back together is not by taking them apart.**
 - (1) **Yes, safety 1st**, in domestic violence cases, physical abuse situations, we counsel ladies 1st & foremost to keep them & their kids safe.
 - (2) **Sometimes**, a few hours away, or an overnight at a friends (w/no intentions on leaving permanently), or when 1 is violent or confused, may at times be desirable.
 - (a) So, possible to separate for **safety** not for a **solution!**

IV. **PAUL ON DIVORCE! (12-16)**

A. **Unequally Yoked Marriages!**

- B. **Some** Christians in this category have gone against scripture & married someone that was **not** a *Born Again* Christian.
- C. **Others** in this category have become Christians **after** they were married, & their spouse has not yet become a Christian.
- D. Here the believer **consecrates** the *unbelieving* partner.
 1. “It is not the taint of heathenism **but** the grace of Christianity which wins the victory.” (Barclay)
 2. Christianity should be **infectious** to all who come in contact with it.

E. (14) **Sanctified...How?**

1. Just as **Laban’s** household was blessed because of **Jacob** “And Laban said to him, “Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the LORD has **blessed** me for your sake.” (Gen.30:27)
2. And **Potiphar’s** because of **Joseph** “So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD **blessed** the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the **blessing** of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.” (Gen.39:5)
3. So w/the unbeliever, he/she is **set-apart** because of God’s presence in the life of the **believing partner**. (Chuck Swindoll, paraphrased, pg.20)
4. So, it sounds like **Sanctified** here, or being **Set apart** is for **blessings sake** not necessarily (yet possibly future) for **salvation sake**.
 - a) **Like** Jeremiah being told to pray for unbelieving Babylon’s peace in Jer.29:7.

- F. Stay together, because by your conversion your **whole family** has been brought onto *praying ground!*
1. As a child of God YOU are His vantage point to reach them. **Who else on this earth will pray more passionately for them?**
 2. Remain married as a “*sanctifying*” influence in the relationship.
 3. As Malachi said, “**He seeks godly offspring!**” (2:16)
- G. (15) Here is the only other “escape clause” in Scripture for a **Biblical Divorce**
1. (i.e. **Abandonment**...and the other **sexual immorality**)
 2. Keep in mind, although Scripture “allows” for divorce under certain circumstances, it never encourages it.
 - a) “*Divorce, the defeat of love, should only be pursued when all other approaches have led to dead ends.*” (Chuck Swindoll, pg.20)
- H. **Let him depart** – You are no longer enslaved/bound to that relationship.
1. If **not under bondage**, then they are “free!” (which also means **free to remarry**)
 2. He/she becomes the “unmarried” of vs.8.
- I. (16) For Paul evangelization began at home!
1. “The unbeliever was to be looked on, **not** as something **unclean** to be **avoided w/ repulsion**, **but** as another **son** or **daughter** to be **won** for God.”²
 2. **Note:** No automatic salvation for all those in the household. As the question asks in the future they “**might** be led to Christ”?
- J. **Do’s & Don’t** for leading your spouse to Christ!
1. **Don’ts:** Don’t Nag; Don’t drive religion down their throat; Don’t give them a miserable time for not coming to Christ; Don’t make them pay for not converting; Don’t expect them to walk the Christian walk...they can’t!
 2. **Do’s:** Do be patient; Do be tolerant; Do pray w/all your heart to live in patient love w/ your unbelieving spouse; Do remember Peter’s word “**Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.**” **Husbands**, do what your commanded also, like...
 - a) Have love that...*Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn’t want what it doesn’t have. Love doesn’t strut, Doesn’t have a swelled head, Doesn’t force itself on others, Isn’t always “me first,” Doesn’t fly off the handle, Doesn’t keep score of the sins of others, Doesn’t revel when others grovel,*

² William Barclay, pg.64.

*Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end. Love never dies.*

1 Cor.13:4-8 (msg)

- K. Do you treat our divorced or divorcing brothers & sisters, who are hurting, as if they committed the *unpardonable sin*? *Is it unpardonable?*
1. Granted if it is **unbiblical**, I'm surely going to challenge them with God's Scripture.
 2. Often *The Church on the whole* has given the straight arm to *divorcees*.
 3. Remember "Divorce is forgivable!" (if repented of)
 4. Divorced Christians need our love, our embraces, our encouragement, and our time. - **Let's not forsake them!**
- L. Marriages are not **seamed** in heaven to be **ripped out** on the earth!