

## Christian Family – Divorce and Remarriage Mt. 19:1-12

### Introduction:

As we look at this very controversial topic, it is our goal to view it from the word of God. We offer no opinions on the matter, only what God Himself has taught. You are encouraged to read the words of God for yourself as we go through this difficult lesson.

### Notice 19:1-3

Especially notice that this was a test of the Pharisees.

The question that is posed to Jesus is this: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” (19:3)

### I. Notice the original purpose of marriage (19:4-6)

- A. As Jesus responds to this question, He immediately goes back to the original purpose of marriage (19:4-5).
  - 1. God made them male and female for the purpose of being joined together as one flesh.
  - 2. Notice the account of the creation of man and woman.
    - a. **Gen. 1:27-28a** - So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. {28} Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.”
    - b. **Gen. 2:18-25** - And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” {19} Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. {20} So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. {21} And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. {22} Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. {23} And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” {24} Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. {25} And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.
    - c. Paul even quotes this passage in **Eph 5:31** - For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

3. Jesus goes back to God's original purpose for marriage, which is for a man and woman to live as husband and wife for a lifetime.
- B. Jesus also adds another admonition (19:6).
1. When God creates a bond between a man and woman, that bond is for life.
  2. Man has no right to separate something (marriage) that God has joined together.

## II. Notice the teachings of Jesus on marriage and divorce (19:7-9).

- A. The Pharisees did not like the answer of Christ, so they posed another question to Jesus (19:7).
1. The question is this: "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" (19:7)
  2. Remember, they are trying to trap Jesus in His words.
  3. Notice what the teaching of Moses was on divorce.
    - a. Deut. 24:1-4 - When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, {2} when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, {3} if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, {4} then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.
    - b. There were two different thoughts on this law concerning divorce.
      - 1) Rabbi Hillel taught that one could be divorced for any cause.
      - 2) Rabbi Shammai taught that one could be divorced only in the case of adultery.
- B. Notice the teaching of Jesus (19:8-9).
1. Jesus tells the Pharisees that Moses allowed divorce "because of the hardness of your hearts" (19:8a).
    - a. It is not that Moses commanded them to get divorced, as the Pharisees tried to indicate.
    - b. Moses only permitted divorce because of the stubbornness of the people.
  2. Jesus again reminds them that this was not the purpose from the beginning (19:8b).
    - a. Remember, the original intent of marriage was for one man and one woman to be married for life.

- b. God never wanted His people to be those who divorced for no reason.
- 3. Jesus takes it a step further and tells them that those who divorce and remarry commit adultery (19:9).
  - a. This is the key verse in the New Testament on the topic of divorce and remarriage.
  - b. The lone exception that is given by Christ is when sexual immorality is involved.
  - c. Jesus says that the one who is divorced for any reason other than fornication “commits adultery.”
    - 1) This is a continuing action, not a one time sin.
    - 2) Mt. 5:31-32 - Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ {32} But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

### III. Notice the difficulty that the disciples had with this statement (19:10-12).

- A. The disciples responded by saying that this was a difficult statement (19:10).
  - 1. The response of Jesus tells us exactly how serious He was in this matter (19:11-12).
    - a. Jesus could have easily said, “It is not that difficult;” but He did not say that.
    - b. Jesus even admits by His reply that it is difficult (19:11-12).
  - 2. Jesus is very specific on the question of divorce and remarriage.
- B. Notice some of the popular arguments today that go against the teaching of Christ.
  - 1. What about those who are not Christians when they divorce but later become Christians?
    - a. We are going to be judged by the words of Christ (Jn. 12:48).
    - b. Even if we do not know His commands at the time, we are still bound to follow them.
  - 2. What about when someone repents of divorce, can they remarry?
    - a. When someone repents, they strive to never commit the same sin again.
    - b. Because this adultery is ongoing, if repentance is made, they will never commit the same sin (in this case adultery) again.
  - 3. What if my spouse is abusive towards me?
    - a. No one should ever be forced to live with someone when their life is threatened.
    - b. However, according to Christ, this is not an acceptable reason to be divorced and remarry.
  - 4. What if my spouse is not a faithful Christian?
    - a. Many will use I Cor. 7:15 to justify this position.

- 1) **I Cor. 7:15** - But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.
- b. However, notice the situation that Paul was addressing.
  - 1) There were those who became Christians after they were married.
  - 2) If the spouse would continue to live with that person, then they were to continue to be married (**7:10-14**).
  - 3) Paul does say that if the non-Christian spouse wants to leave the marriage, then you are to allow them to depart (**7:15**).
  - 4) However, Paul never gives us the authority to remarry in such a case.
    - a) Some will counter with the question, “What about the phrase ‘a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases.’”
    - b) Paul is referring to bondage to hold the marriage together, not to being allowed to remarry.
    - c) Again, Paul never gives the authority to divorce, and for us to allow that to happen is to violate the simple command of Christ (**Mt. 19:9**).
- C. There are many who will teach different things regarding divorce and remarriage.
  1. However, Christ Himself gives only one reason for getting divorced and remarried, and that is sexual immorality.
  2. Remember the words of Peter in **Acts 5:29** - We ought to obey God rather than men.
  3. It should be our goal to please God at all times, even when it may be extremely difficult to do.

### Conclusion:

The real issue is simply this:

How do we feel about the law of God?

Are we willing to put our own opinions and feelings aside in order to follow the word of God?

Remember: We ought to obey God rather than men (**Acts 5:29**).