

Moral Issues

Sorting Truth from Opinion in Divorce Issues

The issue of marriage, divorce and remarriage is stoked with emotion. After all, it implies a divine critique of one's past, present or future marital status. Most would like God's Word to grant approval to their marriage situation. Some will go around asking for different preacher's opinions until they find one that justifies their marital situation. Yet, faithful preachers will not tickle the ears of seekers in order to gain prospective members. We need to speak the truth whether it is popular or unpopular (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

In this article, we will take a look at some of the opinions offered by people on the divorce and remarriage issue. Hopefully, we will accept the Scriptural verdict on the issue above and beyond our mere opinions as we put it to the test (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

“God wants us to be in love.” Many divorced and remarried individuals like to use “love” as a justification for remarriage. The “love” argument is used by homosexuals as a justification for their lifestyle too. Yet, reconsider the two great commandments. Jesus demands we “love God” first and “love your neighbor” second (Matthew 22:36-39). Loving God comes before loving my neighbor. We have it backwards when we try to put God's will in second place behind our own notions of “love.” Paul once condemned doing “evil that good may come” (Romans 3:9). Our marital “love” needs to be in obedience to divine law. If our “love” is outside of Scriptural marriage it is condemned (Hebrews 13:4).

“It's okay to divorce as long as you do not remarry.”

An opinion like this ignores God's original intent for marriage. In the first marriage, Adam was “joined to his wife...” (Genesis 2:24. Jesus once said, “...what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). Should we believe man's opinion of “let them separate” or Jesus who said “let not man separate”? Some would have us to believe God only hates an unscriptural remarriage. Yet, “God hates divorce” (Malachi 2:16). Paul said to men and women: “...let him not divorce her...let her not divorce him...” (1 Cor 7:12-13).

“There are other reasons for divorce besides sexual immorality.” With “no-fault” divorce, any reason is justifiable to obtain a divorce decree in our country. Yet, because civil law allows such does not mean divine law is as permissive. Jesus cannot get much clearer than Matthew 19:9, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” One exception is granted for divorce in this passage. No other divine exception exists. We should not allow our sympathy for difficult situations cause us to search for Biblical loopholes. At marriage, we vow to be faithful “for better or for worse.” Unfortunately, sometimes life gets worse and we have to work through tough circumstances.

“Any divorced person can remarry as long as they are forgiven.”

Pay close attention to the term “whoever” in Matthew 19:9, “...whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery...” The term “whoever” has universal application. Just as salvation is offered to “whoever” believes (John 3:16), divorce is forbidden to “whoever” without just cause! This is not just a rule for the baptized believer, it is for all. God's forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance!

For example, if a homosexual couple marries, then they are baptized into Christ, can they stay married to one another? No, repentance demands they leave their homosexual marriage because such is never allowed by God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Now, consider a like case of adultery. A non-Christian man divorces his first wife because she's no fun anymore. Then, he remarries a frolicsome young girl. They begin to study the Bible and are baptized into Christ for the “remission of their sins” (Acts 2:38). Does this erase his adulterous marriage? If he repents of his adultery, yes. What does repentance require in this case? The same thing required of the homosexual couple—leave the unsanctified marriage. A thief repents by giving back the money he stole and an adulterer repents by giving up the spouse he or she never should have had in the first place!

True faith is word-based, not opinion-based (Romans 10:17).
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