

CALLED
Together
TO BE

SET APART

MYTHS
ABOUT
DIVORCE - PT. 2

8/6/23
MESSAGE NOTES

The culture influenced how the Corinthians viewed many things, especially divorce. What are some myths about divorce that are prevalent in our day?

Last week was myth #1 – Divorce is never wrong.

2ND MYTH – DIVORCE IS ALWAYS WRONG

Simply because it's a myth that divorce is never wrong, it doesn't mean that divorce is always wrong. God's desire for a couple is a life-long committed marriage relationship. Yet, the Bible seems to give 2 ½ exceptions to the rule.

1ST Exception – Sexual Immorality

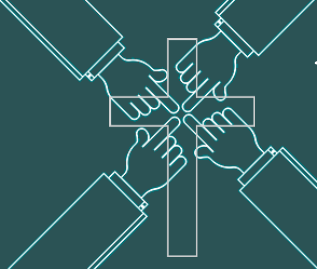
"...I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery..." – Matthew 19:9 (emphasis added)

- Paul in Corinthians is building off Jesus' teaching.
- The Greek word Matthew uses is *porneia*. *Porneia* is an umbrella term for any sexual activity which is outside of God's intended will for humanity, whether married or single.
- This word includes, but is not limited to, adultery, fornication, incest, bestiality, and homosexuality.
- What about things outside of these categories? While they may be considered *porneia*, each sin must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- While *porneia* is a permissible reason for a divorce, that doesn't mean that a person should march to the lawyer's office the moment their spouse commits some sexual sin. God's heart would move someone to fight for the marriage and pray for their spouse's repentance and restoration.

2ND Exception – Departure/Divorce by an Unbelieving Spouse

"If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him...But **if the unbeliever departs**, let him depart; **a brother or a sister is not under bondage** in such cases" – 1 Corinthians 7:12, 13, 15 (emphasis added)

- Here, Paul gives a unique situation where a believer is married to an unbeliever.
- There are two major perspectives in understanding this text:



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1ST – BELIEVER INITIATES

The unbeliever doesn't want anything to do with their believing spouse and physically "departs" from the relationship (the word "depart/separate" is *chorizo* and sometimes refers to physical separation [see Acts 1:4]). Therefore, the believer is permitted to initiate a divorce because they are "not under bondage".

2ND – UNBELIEVER INITIATES

The unbeliever doesn't want anything to do with their believing spouse and "departs" from the marriage by initiating a divorce (*chorizo* sometimes refers to a divorce [see verses 10, 11 and Matt. 19:6 "asunder"/"separate"]). Therefore, the believer is "not under bondage" and is freed from the marriage, presumably free to remarry "in the Lord" (verse 39)

- The second understanding is more likely. However, it is unwise to be dogmatic. Every individual situation will require more insight, prayer, godly counsel, and the Holy Spirit's guidance.

2 ½ Exception – Professing Believer is Reckoned As An Unbeliever

Anyone who refuses to listen to the church must be treated like an unbeliever or a tax collector." – Matthew 18:17b CEV (emphasis added)

- The 2nd exception applies to a situation where there is an unbeliever and a believer. But what happens when one spouse professes to be a believer, but has absolutely no fruit showing themselves to follow Christ in any way? Are they carnal? Are they a new believer, but immature?
- Matthew 18:15-17 gives a framework for someone in the church who is openly living in sin. After confrontation and discipline, if the professing Christian refuses to repent, they are to be considered an unbeliever by the church (see also 1 Corinthians 5:9-13).
- In this case, one spouse who professes Christ may be reckoned as an unbeliever, putting the couple into a situation within the 2nd exception.

Next week, we'll look at some practical applications which come out of the two myths. For example, if divorce is permitted, should it be pursued? What about cases of abuse, or incarceration? How should we view Christians who have been through a divorce?