

Divorce: A Preventable Tragedy!

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INTRODUCTION:

A. Marriage and its sanctity has been for many years under attack in our society!

1. The feminist movement impacts people's views of the God-given roles!
2. Some are attempting to redefine marriage, completely rejecting God's pattern and desires
3. If these attacks on marriage were not tough enough, there is a war being waged against it that comes from within the ranks of those who support it! Divorce!
 - a. In 1997 it was 60% of marriages ended in divorce! Would it have gone down any?
 - b. What's even sadder is the alarming rate of divorce among "Christians!"
 - c. If those who are supposed to defend of the sanctity of marriage are not preserving it through enduring marriages, how can we expect the world to honor it?

B. In this lesson I want us to look at the scriptural causes for divorce:

1. What I am not saying: I am not saying there is more than one cause for divorce that God recognizes and approves → Only one! (**Mal. 2:16; Mt. 5:31-32; 19:8-9; Mk. 10:9**)
 - a. Jesus is very clear on this matter! There is only one reason why a person, with God's approval, can divorce their spouse – It's adultery!
 - b. There is only two ways a person who has been married before can remarry: If their spouse died or if they divorced their spouse for the reason of adultery
 - c. The very act of divorce itself, if it did not have adultery as its cause, is not only a bad idea or against the Lord's wishes – IT IS SIN!
2. What we are going to look at this day is the Lord's instructions for a successful marriage:
 - a. If couple fail to observe these very fundamental directions, their marriage will fail
 - b. Even if a couple stays married, just because a divorce doesn't occur doesn't mean it's a success! Given time, most miserable marriages end in divorce!
 - c. We've heard the jokes! "We're having a buryin... I mean marryin today!" - "We're not soul mates, we're cell mates!" - "It's not holy wedlock, it's holy deadlock!"
3. Divorce is a tragedy that doesn't have to be – Observing God's instructions will not only prevent a divorce but will also ensure a happy and successful marriage!

I. FIRST OF ALL, THERE'S A FAILURE TO LEAVE AND CLEAVE:

A. In the very beginning of time, God made clear His plan for marriage! (Gen. 2:18-25**)**

1. After the creation, everything was good and perfect! Every single creature had a mate, except for man – The text is quite plain on this: He was alone!
 - a. Every other creature had a companion for procreation, companionship, and help
 - b. There was no helper suitable for man – He was alone! Physically and emotionally!
 - c. Some have noted that this is probably why God had man at this point to go through and name every single creature → It would drive this point home in his mind!
 - d. So God created woman – Taken from man and created as a "help-meet" for him!
2. God was very clear about the design for marriage → One man and one woman
 - a. Notice that God did not say, "A person shall leave... and cleave to another person"
 - b. The very fact that God specified one man and one woman means that God does not recognize any other type of union – be it same sex or multiple spouses!
3. We can go back to the beginning & see the foundation of a good marriage and the cause for a failure in many: Leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh (**vs. 24**)
 - a. When there is a failure to observe this pattern in marriage, the marriage will be unsuccessful and will likely end in the tragedy of divorce!
 - b. When questioned about divorce, it was to this pattern that Jesus appealed

B. The two to be married must LEAVE their father and mother:

1. First let's eliminate any confusion by noting what this does not mean: (**Prov. 4:1-4**)
 - a. It does not necessarily mean that they cannot live with their parents
 - b. It certainly doesn't mean they have to sever all contact and association with them

- c. It doesn't mean that the children no longer have to honor and respect their parents
- d. It surely doesn't mean that they no longer seek their parents advice or follow their parents instructions as they grow older and remember their teaching!
- 2. It may be that because one or both of the people getting married have decided to follow the Lord, that they in a very real sense have to leave their parents! **(Mt. 19:29)**
- 3. Sometimes when two people get married they do not leave their fathers and mothers and start their own lives together!
 - a. Sometimes one of the sets of parents doesn't like the spouse – So they speak degradingly of the spouse, do things to hurt them, and destroys the marriage
 - b. Sometimes the parents battle one another in order to win the children's allegiance
 - c. **Illustration:** Montgomery couple: In-laws on both sides were tearing the marriage apart... working to "win" the children's allegiance... the result? Divorce!
- 4. We can see what a failure to "leave" caused in Jacob's marriage(s):
 - a. First of all, Laban meddled way too much in Jacob's relationship – Not allowing Rachel to leave him and become one with Jacob! Much trouble followed!
 - b. Rachel later does not seem to be ready to truly leave her father because when they did move away she took her father's household idols with her!
 - c. These problems created a great strain on Jacob and Rachel's relationship!

C. The two must cleave to one another and become one flesh!

- 1. The word "cleave" means "To cleave, to adhere... as if with glue, to be glued"
 - a. It involves the idea of being attached to another: To be lovingly devoted to another
 - b. The same idea is used in the New Testament to talk about how people cleaved unto the Lord after turning to Him **(Acts 11:23 – KJV)**
 - c. More than an "I DO" or words on a certificate – It is becoming one being glued together by love and their commitment to one another!
- 2. A man and woman who join in marriage are no longer two but **ONE FLESH!** **(Acts 4:32)**
 - a. **Dave Ramsey:** Couples having separate checking accounts notes, "The preacher when you got married pronounced you one flesh... not a joint venture!"
 - b. Becoming one flesh means that you have unity – Two lives now are one life!
 - c. Since you are now one you do not act, make decisions, or even speak without considering the impact that it will have on your spouse!
 - d. You go through the good times and the bad times as one flesh!
- 3. This idea of cleaving and becoming one flesh is a growing process! It ought to get better with every passing year! If not... there is something wrong in the relationship!

II. SECONDLY, MANY MARRIAGES FAIL BECAUSE THERE IS A LACK OF COMMITMENT:

A. Marriage is a union that is a life-long commitment!

- 1. Our society seems to be viewing marriage as a "disposable" agreement more and more!
 - a. What's the purpose of "Pre-nuptial Agreements?" It's entering a marriage already making plans for it's failure! What marriage would last under those terms?
 - b. It seems like we hear of more and more who have been married not once, not twice, but multiple times – And adultery is rarely the cause!
 - c. Instead of working things out, many end because of "irreconcilable differences!"
- 2. The marriage bond lasts as long as both of the parties live! **(Romans 7:2-3)**
 - a. Do you remember what some of the last words the preacher said at your wedding wear? As long as the both of you shall live... till death do you part!
 - b. Not concerned with exception here but the rule! A woman in her second marriage while her first husband lives in an adulterer because she's still bound!
 - c. There are only two ways a marriage bond can be broken! If one of the parties in the marriage die or if the divorce was for the cause of adultery!
- 3. God is serious about our attitudes toward and the fulfillment of vows that we make!
 - a. It would be better to have never vowed at all than to not fulfill it! **(Ecc. 5:4-5)**
 - b. Breaking the vows is a sin not only against your partner but also against God!
 - c. This is a serious matter! It's a matter of sin and has eternal consequences!

4. Divorces ALWAYS occur because a person (or persons) is not truly committed to their partners, their marriage, and their vows!
 - a. Don't allow even the idea of divorce to enter into your marriage! Not an option!
 - b. Some wives or husbands will use divorce as a threat when they get into an argument, are mad, or are trying to get their way with their spouse!
 - c. Marriages fail when people don't care anymore about the marriage! There's no work to make it grow stronger! There's no feeling of need to preserve it!

B. Not only is there a breakdown of commitment to the duration of the marriage, but sometimes there is a breakdown in commitment to the marriage's success!

1. As noted, a couple staying together doesn't mean that their marriage is successful!
 - a. **Illustration:** One becomes a Christian, continues attending and appears religious to many – Inside no love, commitment, and desire to please God!
 - b. Sure, a couple may remain "married" and may even abide under the same roof; however, diligent effort is given to make it a happy and nurturing relationship!
2. True love commits and makes sacrifices for the good of others! (**I Cor. 13:4-8**)
 - a. Creating a marriage is easy to do! However, having the "Happily Ever After" ending takes both parties working together in love!
 - b. **Illustration:** Marriage is like a box of wonderful things: Friendship, intimacy, sex, support, etc → If you take out of the box you have to put back into it!
 - c. If one is gauging happiness on what they get out of the relationship, great trouble arises! Two givers will be much happier than two getters!
3. Does it seem like your marriage is never ending or that it's flown by? Jacob had to work for seven years for Rachel, but it only seemed like several days! Why? (**Gen 29:20**)

III. THIRDLY, THERE IS A BREAKDOWN IN FULFILLING THE GOD-GIVEN ROLES:

A. Our society blurs and is losing the distinction of the husband and wife in the home:

1. There is a heavy push for "equality" – What the man can do the woman can do
 - a. What the world doesn't understand is that when you make a woman equal to a man you are degrading her – She is in an elevated place!
 - b. "Submission" is almost a "curse-word" to our society today!
2. Men are staying home having their wives outside the home to work – Mothers that work at home are only a staple on "Nick At Night" type programming!
3. Back in the very start of the first "marriage" God was clear that there were distinctions in the man and the woman's roles in the home! (**Gen. 3:16-19**)
 - a. Woman: Bear children, desire husband, submit to her husband
 - b. Man: Responsibility of working to earn a living by the sweat of his brow

B. The husband's role as defined by God must be respected, followed, and desired:

1. Do you understand the great risk your wife has taken and the faith she has placed in you?
 - a. She depends on you as the "breadwinner" for the family – Financial support
 - b. She depends on you to be considerate of and fulfill her emotional needs
 - c. She depends on you to be there for her spiritual support and leadership
 - d. In dating she wouldn't imagine you forsaking these needs; however, after being married for a while some men are satisfied just supporting her financially
2. The husband should work to be a strong spiritual leader in his own home: (**Eph. 6:1-4**)
 - a. Too many husbands leave all the spiritual leadership of the children up to the mothers alone! A husband who is never home cannot lead his home!
 - b. He has to set the example of prayer, bible study, worship in the home! He makes sound decisions on moral issues, modesty, and dating in children!
 - c. The wife and the children can look up to him spiritually and follow him with trust!
 - d. When the husband fails to be the leader in home in spiritual matters it creates great division! The wife pulls one way he pulls another → Something will break!
3. A successful marriage is also dependant upon the husband loving his wife! (**Eph 5:25-29**)
 - a. Some think they are in love when in all actuality they are in lust! Marriages founded

- upon lust will likely suffer shipwreck after the newness wears off!
- b. What is this love? It's the type of love that Christ showed on the cross! It's a self-sacrificial love! He surrenders himself in his love for her!
 - c. This type of love removes all conditions! When did Christ love us? Too many say or at least think, "I will do this.... if she will do this..." → That's not true love!
 - d. If you are treating others better than your wife you are destroying your marriage!
4. The husband also has the responsibility of understanding his wife! **(I Peter 3:7)**
 - a. When a he truly seeks to understand his wife it shows his humility, love, & care!
 - b. How would you like working for a boss who could care less about your feelings and your thoughts? Try living with him all day long!
 - c. While it may seem difficult at times – The husband should ALWAYS do his best to understand his wife! Her needs, her emotions, and what pleases her
 5. Serious! If you don't fulfill your roles as a husband you will not only wreck your marriage but your prayers will be hindered → You'll bust hell wide open without them!

C. The wife's role as defined by God must be respected, followed, and desired!

1. Contrary to our society's ways, a wife's primary role is in the home! **(Titus 2:1-5)**
 - a. Among this list of things that older women are to teach younger women how to do is the role of being a "home-maker" → A godly wife is what makes a home
 - b. Not a role to be mocked! It's an honored job! A noble calling! A high position!
 - c. **Illustration:** Sanballat & Tobiah had taken residence in the storehouse of the temple: Priests had to go outside to work – God-given work went undone!
2. The wife has the responsibility of submitting to her husband! **(Eph. 5:22-24)**
 - a. To She will surrender her will to husbands, patiently yielding to his judgments!
 - b. When this passage comes up in Bible class people want discuss any exceptions... we must understand the rule before we move on to the exceptions!
 - c. Some choose carnal devices → Manipulation, belittlement, bringing in others to take sides, & withholding intimacy! They only see the risk in submission!
 - d. The wife does her part because of her submission to the Lord – Even if her actions are not reciprocated by love and praise from her husband, she still submits!
3. If she really wants a successful marriage, she will also respect her husband! **(Eph. 5:33)**
 - a. One of a man's most basic needs is to be honored, respected, and admired
 - b. Even if her husband isn't doing right, she will look for the good she can praise!

CONCLUSION: Marriage is a partnership in life! (I Peter 3:7) → What are YOU doing to ensure a happy and successful marriage? What are you doing to divorce-proof your marriage?