

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1-17-16 PM NOTES  
"HERE WE STAND ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE"  
MATTHEW 19:3-9  
#13 in Series, "Here We Stand"

A Portion of the Resolution Presented to the Southern Baptist Convention Messengers in Orlando in 2010, Entitled, "On the Scandal of Southern Baptist Divorce"

WHEREAS, The Bible reveals that marriage is a gospel mystery, pointing to Christ's union with His church (Ephesians 5:22-32); and

WHEREAS, The Bible teaches that marriage was established by God "in the beginning" to be a permanent one-flesh union (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:1-9); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus commands us that what "God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:9); and

WHEREAS, The acceleration in rates of divorce in Southern Baptist churches has not come through a shift in theological conviction about scriptural teaching on divorce, but rather through cultural accommodation;

RESOLVED, That we express our conviction that a denomination defined theologically by our belief in the authority and inerrancy of Holy Scripture ought to proclaim the whole counsel of God, especially when the Bible confronts our own patterns of sin; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on our churches to proclaim the Word of God on the permanence of marriage, and to provide ongoing marriage enrichment opportunities, in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's abhorrence of divorce; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on our churches in our wedding services to maintain the gravity of the vows being undertaken, not simply as a token of a couple's romance but as a covenant before God, until death do them part; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we pray that the true peace of our Lord Jesus Christ will reign in us such that the next generation will see the gospel not only in the counter-cultural nature of our verbal witness but also in the counter-cultural love and fidelity of our marriages.

**Deuteronomy 24:1 (NASB)** "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 indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house".

I. The Bible Speaks to Marriage (vv. 4-6)

A. Marriage Is Planned by God (v. 4)

**Genesis 1:27-28a (NASB)** "27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth...'"

**Genesis 2:18 (NASB)** "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'"

**Genesis 2:22 (NASB)** "The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man."

B. Marriage Is a Physical Union (vv. 5-6a)

“As God by creation made two of one, so again by marriage He made one of two.”

—Thomas Adams

**1 Corinthians 7:4 (NASB)** “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.”

**Ephesians 5:28 (NASB)** “So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself”.

**1 Corinthians 6:17 (NASB)** “But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.”

**Ephesians 5:32 (NASB)** “This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”

C. Marriage Is a Permanent Union (v. 6b)

**Malachi 2:14b (NASB)** “...the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”

“Jesus demands that husbands and wives be faithful to their marriages. He does not assume this is easy. But He teaches that it is a great thing because marriage is the work of God Himself whereby He creates a new reality of ‘one flesh’ that surpasses human comprehension and portrays to the world in human form the covenant union between God and His people. Marriage is sacred beyond what most people imagine, because it is a unique creation of God, a dramatic portrayal of God’s relation to His people, and a display of God’s glory. Against all the diminished attitudes about marriage in our day, Jesus’ message is that marriage is a great work of God and a sacred covenant breakable only by death.”

—John Piper

II. The Bible Speaks to Divorce (vv. 7-9)

A. The Error (v. 7)

B. The Explanation (v. 8)

C. The Exception (v. 9)

**John 3:16 (NASB)** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

*In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out [secure] a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead. (Westminster Confession, XXIV. 5-6)*

**1 Corinthians 7:15 (NASB)** “Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”

**First Baptist Church Powell 1 17 2016 PM**  
**Chapter 14: Here We Stand On Divorce and Remarriage**  
**Series: Here We Stand**  
**Matthew 19:3-9**

*Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE and send her away?” He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”*

In the traditional marriage ceremony, the pastor usually ends with these words, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” That is from the King James Version and “asunder” is translated “separate” in most all modern translations. We are in a culture where husbands and wives are regularly putting asunder, even in the church.

Marriage is treated flippantly in our culture (that word “flippant” means to refuse to take something seriously). That *flippancy* is evidenced in two primary ways. First, many simply see no value in marriage and just choose to live together, have children, and then part when they no longer feel the same toward one another. The second way marriage is treated flippantly is evidenced in couples who choose to get married, but end the marriage when there are problems, their feelings begin to change toward one another, or they just get bored. According to the Bible, God takes marriage seriously (that is the opposite of *flippantly*). The Bible very clearly teaches that sex and having children are reserved for a man and a woman in a covenant marriage. God’s design for marriage is that it is ended only by death. Divorce was not a part of God’s original plan for marriage. God’s view of divorce is summarized in Malachi 2:16a (NASB): “‘For I hate divorce,’ says the Lord, the God of Israel...”

One of the scandals of modern Christianity is the conforming of the church to the culture’s views of marriage. Even in our denomination that boldly stands for the inerrancy of Scripture and declares that we are a people of “the Book,” divorce has often been accepted as normal and really “no big deal.” That flippancy led many of the leaders of our denomination to take some bold public action a few years ago. At our annual convention in Orlando in 2010 the messengers passed a lengthy resolution concerning divorce. The resolution was entitled, “On the Scandal of Southern Baptist Divorce.” It is a very lengthy resolution, but I will give a few excerpts:

WHEREAS, The Bible reveals that marriage is a gospel mystery, pointing to Christ’s union with His church (Ephesians 5:22-32); and

WHEREAS, The Bible teaches that marriage was established by God “in the beginning” to be a permanent one-flesh union (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:1-9); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus commands us that what “God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10:9);

and

WHEREAS, The acceleration in rates of divorce in Southern Baptist churches has not come through a shift in theological conviction about scriptural teaching on divorce but rather through cultural accommodation;

RESOLVED, That we express our conviction that a denomination defined theologically by our belief in the authority and inerrancy of Holy Scripture ought to proclaim the whole counsel of God, especially when the Bible confronts our own patterns of sin; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That we call on our churches to proclaim the Word of God on the permanence of marriage, and to provide ongoing marriage enrichment opportunities, in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and God's abhorrence of divorce; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That we call on our churches in our wedding services to maintain the gravity of the vows being undertaken, not simply as a token of a couple's romance but as a covenant before God, until death do them part; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That we pray that the true peace of our Lord Jesus Christ will reign in us such that the next generation will see the gospel not only in the counter-cultural nature of our verbal witness but also in the counter-cultural love and fidelity of our marriages.

There have been times in the past that I have been ashamed of our denomination, but this resolution thrilled my heart and accurately reflects my desire for our church and indeed all true churches. May God convict us as to how we have brought reproach on Him by being conformed to the world.

When Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees in Matthew 19, they were attempting to entrap Him and totally discredit Him. We see their question in Matthew 19:3b (NASB): "...Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" Divorce was just as controversial in Jesus' day as it is in ours. The Rabbis lined up on two different sides concerning the correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, specifically the phrase, "some indecency in her." One Jewish Rabbi (Shammai) interpreted it to mean "gross uncleanness" which meant sexual unfaithfulness. Another Rabbi (Hillel) took a very lax view and said that "some indecency" is any disappointment with her – dissatisfaction with how she cooked, looked, talked, etc. The followers of Hillel basically believed that anything could be a ground for divorce. It was Hillel that the Pharisees sided with. The Pharisees thought that if they could get Jesus on either side, He would alienate the other side.

## **I. The Bible Speaks to Marriage (Matthew 19:4-6)**

Jesus threw them for a loop with His answer. He didn't even touch the Hillel, Shammai controversy; He went to the Old Testament Scriptures all the way back to creation to emphasize God's ideal. Here is what we learn from Jesus' answer: It is impossible to deal Biblically with divorce until we understand God's design and plan for marriage. Divorce has no place in God's design for marriage. If a marriage is built according to God's ideal, divorce is a non-issue.

### **A. Marriage Is Planned by God (v 4)**

We can see how marriage was planned by God in His design in creation of making one male and one female. Genesis 1:27-28a (NASB): "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth..." The fact that God designed marriage is even more clear in Genesis 2:18 (NASB): "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'" Notice that it is God who made a wife for Adam. Marriage did not evolve into existence. It was planned by God as is evidenced in the very distinct manner He created the first two people and His stated reason for creating Eve. After God created Eve, He gave the bride to the groom. Genesis 2:22 (NASB) says "The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man." In giving Eve to Adam, God established a new kind of relationship called marriage.

### **B. Marriage Is a Physical Union (v 5-6a)**

The Puritan Thomas Adams said, "As God by creation made two of one, so again by marriage He made one of two" [*Puritan Quotes*, page 178].

The union of the husband and wife takes precedence over and is more binding than the relationship between parent and child. Notice that it is a union of flesh and not of spirit because if they became one spirit, death would not break the union. Since they are one flesh, the marriage bond is broken by physical death. In a marriage, the body of one's spouse is as his own body. 1 Corinthians 7:4 (NASB): "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*." Ephesians 5:28 (NASB): "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself."

Why does God make the husband and wife one flesh in marriage? It is to illustrate the covenant that God the Son has with His church. 1 Corinthians 6:17 (NASB): "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*." To illustrate the "one spirit" relationship, God gave marriage as a "one flesh" relationship to give a visible, physical picture. That is the whole point of Ephesians 5:22-33. Marriage is a picture of Christ and the church and their "one spirit" union. After quoting the same verse Jesus quoted (Genesis 2:24), Paul says in Ephesians 5:32 (NASB): "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." Marriage is a physical union that illustrated, gives a physical picture of the relationship of a Christian with Christ. This is a very important truth in understanding why Jesus' teaching on marriage was so extreme.

### C. Marriage Is a Permanent Union (v 6b)

The word translated "separate" when used in the context of marriage always meant to divorce. When a man and a woman enter a covenant with one another evidenced by vows given to God, they become one flesh and divorce is to never be considered as an option.

The Bible recognizes the entrance into marriage as being a covenant. Malachi 2:14b (NASB): "...the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant." Most people see contract and covenant as closely related terms, but they are not even cousins.

A contract is entered because of a lack of trust. A contract says, "I do not fully trust you and so we need to set some things in writing that will insure I don't get 'taken.'" A contract focuses on limits, rights, and even how to break the contract. A contract basically says, "Let's make a deal." In a contract, both parties agree to do certain things for the other for a certain period of time.

A covenant, on the other hand, is rooted in trust and not terms. A covenant is more about giving than what we get. A contract is about legalities and loopholes. A covenant is about love and loyalty. In marriage counseling, I can usually tell within a few minutes if one or both parties in the marriage are viewing the marriage as a covenant or a contract. If there is a view of "I've been doing my part, but my spouse is not holding up his/her end," it is a dead give-away that this person sees marriage as a contract. If I hear, "I just don't love him/her anymore," it is a contract. If I hear, "I'm willing to do my part if he/she will do their part," it is a contract. A covenant emphasizes the relationship, the giving of self, faithfulness until death, and a servant spirit. Listen to the traditional vows and see if you hear contract or covenant: "I \_\_\_\_\_ take you \_\_\_\_\_ to be my lawful wedded [husband/wife] for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, to have and to hold, to love and to cherish till death do us part." That *screams covenant*, not contract.

God's ideal for marriage is that it is a permanent, covenant union between a man and a woman until death do they part. John Piper says it well:

Jesus demands that husbands and wives be faithful to their marriages. He does not assume this is easy. But He teaches that it is a great thing because marriage is the work of God Himself whereby He creates a new reality of 'one flesh' that surpasses human comprehension and portrays to the world in human form the covenant union between God and His people. Marriage is sacred beyond what most people imagine, because it is a unique creation of God, a dramatic portrayal of God's relation to His people, and a display of God's glory. Against all the diminished attitudes about marriage in our day, Jesus' message is that marriage is a great work of God and a sacred covenant

breakable only by death.

[John Piper, What Jesus Demands from the World, page 301]

When we begin to see marriage as a display of God's glory, it elevates the seriousness of marriage to a new level. Ultimately, marriage is about God's glory and not about my happiness or fulfillment. Marriage is the ultimate display of the faithfulness of God (a part of His glory) to His covenant people. That is why Jesus' teaching on the permanence of marriage is so extreme. When two people in a covenant marriage who have been made one flesh by God divorce, the display of God's glorious faithfulness to His covenant people is marred and distorted. That is not an insignificant thing. Here is the mistake that many good churches make who really want to see marriages last. They emphasize the human pain involved in divorce. I would by no means want to minimize the pain and agony caused by divorce – pain not only for the couple (especially if there is an innocent party who did not want the divorce), and not only for any children involved but even the extended family. However, that misses the point of the greatest evil of divorce.

Divorce destroys the God ordained display of His glorious covenant faithfulness. Staying married therefore is not ultimately about the quality of the relationship between the husband and the wife. It is about keeping a covenant. It is about keeping a vow to God. It is about the accurate display of His glory. The reason there is no marriage in Heaven is because there is no need for the picture, because the covenant people of God (the church) who are called "The Bride of Christ" are with the bridegroom and there is no more need for the picture.

## **II. The Bible Speaks to Divorce (Matthew 19:7-9)**

The Pharisees continue their attempt to trip Jesus up and discredit Him.

### **A. Error (v 7)**

When Jesus appealed to God's ideal, He went back to creation. The Pharisees then tried to put Him at odds with Moses. They weren't interested in the truth; they were interested only in defending their traditions. They made some serious mistakes with their interpretation of Scripture. They were referring to Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Nowhere in this passage, or in any of the books that Moses was inspired to write, is divorce *commanded*. Actually, this is simply Moses regulating what was going on and it relates primarily to a man divorcing his wife, she marries another, and that second marriage ends (divorce or death), but she cannot go back and marry the first husband. The only command Moses gave was *not* about divorce, but about remarriage. The error of the Pharisees was that they saw divorce as simply getting the paperwork right.

### **B. Explanation (v 8)**

Jesus set straight their faulty interpretation of Scripture. Moses did not command divorce; he permitted it. The fact is that men were arbitrarily divorcing their wives without any reason at all leaving them without any way to care for themselves. He at least set strict regulations on it and made it so that it was not an arbitrary, whimsical act. Why did Moses have to even speak to divorce? Jesus said that it was because of the hardness of their heart. Think about it: Divorce is always the result of a hard heart on the part of one or both spouses – always, always! Without exception! If there was an openness and yieldedness to the Lord, divorce would never happen. I have watched in counseling and seen the hard heart. Perhaps the husband has been really lousy and she put up with him and finally says, "That's it." He sees what he is about to lose and seemingly repents and tries to change and begs for another chance, but her emotions are dead toward him and her heart becomes hard and she doesn't listen. You may as well be talking to a concrete wall than try to talk to her – hard heart. I've seen the same thing reversed where the husband loses his affection for his wife and hardens his heart and won't listen. Divorce is always the result of a hard heart on the part of one, or both, of the marriage partners.

### C. The Exception (v 9)

Jesus says that when a person is divorced from their spouse and marries someone else, they have committed adultery. Then He gives one exception where a divorce is permitted and many Greek scholars tell us that the grammar of this verse indicates that a Scriptural ground for divorce is a ground for remarriage. What is this exception? It is translated in the NASB “immorality.” In the NKJV and the ESV, it is “sexual immorality.” In the KJV it is “fornication,” and in the NIV it is “marital unfaithfulness.”

There is some disagreement among Bible believing teachers as to the meaning of this exception.

There are some great Bible scholars who say that this is not truly an exception as we apply it today. Some call them “absolutists” and their view is called, “the permanence view.” The most common explanation they give of this passage is that it is talking about immorality during the *betrothal* phase which is when a couple are committed to one another, but the marriage has not been sexually consummated. This was the situation of Mary and Joseph when Mary was told that she was with child by the Holy Spirit. I would in some ways like to believe this view. It would make hard decisions on who I can remarry easy. It would just be “no” to all who ask who have been divorced. As I look at the evidence of Scripture, I cannot accept the *Absolutist* view. I am convinced that “sexual immorality” refers to sexual unfaithfulness by one marriage partner. This seems to me to be the obvious interpretation in the context it is used. The word translated “sexual immorality” is *porneia*.

The evidence leads me to believe that it is an umbrella term for all sexual activity outside a covenant marriage. It would include under the umbrella, adultery, homosexuality, and for those not in a covenant marriage, premarital sex. This is the commonly accepted interpretation of most of the reformers and most evangelical scholars today. The Westminster Confession puts it this way: *In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out [secure] a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead* [XXIV. 5-6].

This sexual immorality breaks the covenant and divorce is allowed, but still divorce is not commanded. Even when there is unfaithfulness, I believe that every effort should be made to restore the marriage, but if there is no repentance, divorce is allowed. Divorce in Scripture is the last option, not the first option. I encourage the offended party to remember the story of Hosea and his unfaithful wife that he waited for and eventually took her back. In light of that, do not end a marriage until there is a peace from God and an obvious unwillingness to repent.

The passage here is clear that divorce for any other reason is wrong and to remarry is to commit adultery. It should be noted that the Holy Spirit adds another exception in 1 Corinthians 7:15 for when a believer is married to an unbeliever and the unbeliever departs (leaves in a final sort of way), remarriage is allowed. 1 Corinthians 7:15 (NASB) says, “Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such *cases*, but God has called us to peace.”

Keep this in mind. Divorce in Scripture is permitted only because of mankind’s sin. That is why all believers should hate divorce as God does.

### Conclusion

Allow me to conclude with a special word of warning about marriage. I want to address three different categories of people. To the single, I say “Be careful!” Don’t marry for the wrong reasons. Treat marriage seriously because it is for life! To the married I say, “Be committed.” Divorce is not to be seen as an option. Don’t look for a way out; look for a way through. To the divorced I say, “Be confrontive.” If you divorced for unscriptural reasons, quit rationalizing it, confront it as a sin, repent, and receive the blessings of a repentant heart. If you divorced and were remarried unscripturally, confront it, stop rationalizing, and repent. God honors a repentant heart.

Marriage is serious. Be careful, be committed, and be confrontive.