

When a marriage ends... divorce and remarriage (Matthew 19)

13 You drown the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and wailing because he no longer accepts the offerings you bring him. 14 You ask why he no longer accepts them. It is because he knows you have broken your promise to the wife you married when you were young. She was your partner, and you have broken your promise to her, although you promised before God that you would be faithful to her. 15 Didn't God make you one body and spirit with her? What was his purpose in this? It was that you should have children who are truly God's people. So make sure that none of you breaks his promise to his wife. 16 "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel. "I hate it when one of you does such a cruel thing to his wife. Make sure that you do not break your promise to be faithful to your wife (Mal. 2:13-16 – Good News)."

Why does God hate divorce?

- The same reason that those who have gone through a divorce hate divorce!

Jesus' own history with divorce

- Joseph offered Mary a quiet divorce when she became pregnant (Matthew 1:19)
- Jesus was from the lineage of David who himself was divorced (1 Samuel 25:44)
- Jesus' interaction with the woman at the well (multiple divorces)...

...called her to start a new life (John 4)

31 "Remember the Scripture that says, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him do it legally, giving her divorce papers and her legal rights'? 32 Too many of you are using that as a cover for selfishness and whim, pretending to be righteous just because you are 'legal.' Please, no more pretending... (Matthew 5:31-32 – The Message).

Jesus teaches - Sermon on the Mount

- Divorce is not a way to manipulate to get your own selfish desire

3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus and tried to trick him. They asked, "Is it right for a man to divorce his wife for any reason he chooses?" 4 Jesus answered, "Surely you have read in the Scriptures: When God made the world, 'he made them male and female.' 5 And God said, 'So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.' 6 So there are not two, but one. God has joined the two together, so no one should separate them." 7 The Pharisees asked, "Why then did Moses give a command for a man to divorce his wife by giving her divorce papers?" 8 Jesus answered, "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because you refused to accept God's teaching, but divorce was not allowed in the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman is guilty of adultery. The only reason for a man to divorce his wife is if his wife has sexual relations with another man (Matthew 19:3-9 – New Century)."

Jesus underscores God's ideal that man should not divorce (even though permitted)

Jesus points the Pharisees to God's heart...

...and turns their focus from the letter of the law to the spirit of the law

Paul teaches on divorce

10 To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband 11 (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. 12 To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. 13 And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife,

and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you (1 Corinthians 7:10-15 – NRSV).

Some counsel to remember - (1 Corinthians 7)

- God's intention is that there be repentance, forgiveness, and real change...
...rather than separation, divorce and repeated cycles that destroy
- While it is not God's intention that people divorce...
...sometimes there are no practical solutions and divorce is permitted

Three responses that Paul is making

- Abandoning the family is a serious issue no matter how the family is composed (v. 10-11)
- A believer should stay in a marriage to one who does not believe as long as possible (v. 12-13)
- However, God desires peace in relationships and that may not be possible in a family
...where the spouse does not share the Kingdom values of the believer (v. 15)
- If the person who does not believe desires to leave he/she should be allowed to do so (v. 15)

1 "Suppose a man marries a woman but later discovers something about her that is shameful. So he writes her a letter of divorce, gives it to her, and sends her away. 2 If she then leaves and marries another man 3 and the second husband also divorces her or dies, 4 the former husband may not marry her again... (Deuteronomy 24:1-4a – NLT).

Moses allowed divorce because of the hardness of men's hearts (Matthew 19:8)

What God does forbid in this passage...

...to renew a marriage relationship that has been broken by a second marriage

The Bible has fundamental principles concerning divorce and remarriage

1. Marriage is intended to be permanent - until death do us part
2. Divorce is messy... three reasons God permitted (not required) divorce
 - The hardness of men's hearts - Deuteronomy 24
 - For sexual immorality - Matthew 5:19
 - When a non-believing spouse deserts a believing spouse - 1 Corinthians 7

Divorce always stems from sin... but it is not necessarily sinful

3. Remarriage is a difficult proposition
 - The reason to divorce is to be free to remarry
4. No matter what the cause of a failed marriage (whether there is a divorce or not)...
...those affected need to be healed, comforted and made whole by God

God never said he hated divorced people...but He hates the things that shatter the lives of the people He loves