

The Trauma of Divorce

Matthew 5:31-32

I. Jesus is reinterpreting the Law. What is he responding to?

- A. The claim is that Moses gave a green light to divorce.
 - 1. The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus (Matthew 19:3-9).
 - 2. They are familiar with what he said in today's passage.
 - (a) They think he's contradicting Moses and the Law of God.
 - (b) They want to publicly expose him as a false teacher.
 - 3. Pharisees: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"
 - (a) Jesus responds from Genesis (Matthew 19:4-6).
 - (b) God makes husband and wife one.
 - (c) Divorce is not what God wants for us.
 - 4. They think they have caught him.
 - (a) "Why did Moses command...?" (Deut. 24:1-4).
 - (b) This is case law. Verses 1-3 give the circumstances.
 - (c) Verse 4 gives the law.
 - (d) Why would he remarry her? To get another dowry (that is exploitation, not love).
 - 5. The Pharisees are legalists, applying the Law by the letter.
 - (a) Moses didn't command that a certificate be given.
 - (b) He said, if this happens.
 - 6. Jesus says Moses "permitted" divorce (Matthew 19:8).
 - (a) He permitted it because of people's hard hearts.
 - (b) Ironically, Moses was divorced (Exodus 18:2; Num. 12:1).
 - (c) We don't know why. Divorce happens.
 - 7. The Pharisees are rationalizing divorce.
 - (a) "It's okay as long as you give a certificate and send her away."

II. Marriage is supposed to reflect God's relationship with his people.

- A. Both relationships are based on covenants (sacred promises).
 - 1. They are joined together as one (Eph. 5:31 and I Cor. 6:17).
 - 2. Marriage is a spiritual union. It is supposed to be for life.
- B. The prophet, Malachi, communicated God's view of divorce (Malachi 2:13-16).
 - 1. God is not accepting their sacrifices, answering their prayers.
 - (a) He is acting as a covenant witness between husband and wife.
 - (b) As a witness to the promises God holds people accountable.
 - (c) Blessings for faithfulness. Consequences for unfaithfulness.
 - 2. Husband and wife are made one by God.
 - (a) So do not break faith with your life partner.

- (b) God says he hates divorce (He does not hate those who are divorced).
 - (c) He equates divorce with violence (Malachi 2:16).
 - (d) Why? Because you're cutting off part of yourself, your spouse. It is like a spiritual amputation.
- 3. He said, guard yourself in your spirit. Against what?
 - (a) Against animosity. Again, unfaithfulness and disloyalty.
 - (b) Do not break faith (faithfulness, trust) with your spouse.

C. Why does God hate divorce?

- 1. Because it is not what he intended for us.
 - (a) Marriage is meant to be wholesome. It is holy and good.
- 2. Because divorce hurts people. It is relational trauma.
 - (a) Divorce is hurtful, broken, and violent.
- 3. Last week: parallel between marriage and covenant with God.
 - (a) 3 Parallel promises.
 - (b) I will not abandon you (John 14:18) (never leave you...)
 - (c) I will show myself to you (John 14:21) (Gen.: "they were naked and felt no shame", a cultural idiom for being married).
 - (d) We will make our home with you (John 14:23).
- 4. Both relationships are about knowing and being known.
- 5. In marriage, I pledge to love you so long as we both shall live.
 - (a) But in divorce, I abandon you.
- 6. You reveal yourself to me in marriage, physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually (vulnerability and trust).
 - (a) You show yourself to me, but I reject you (shame).
- 7. In marriage we leave home to build a home together.
 - (a) But now you must leave our home (comfort and security).

III. Practices to help us "keep faith" with our spouse.

- A. Grow in loving as you've been loved by God.
 - 1. Marry a believer (I Corinthians 7:39; II Corinthians 6:14).
 - 2. Wait until marriage for intimacy.
 - 3. Understand what it means to lay down your lives for each other and do it.
 - (a) Priorities need to change. Some old ways need to go.
 - 4. Guard your hearts against competing attachments.
 - 5. Meets each other's needs for companionship and intimacy.
 - 6. Extend grace and forgiveness.
 - 7. Be aware of spiritual warfare. Fight back!
 - 8. Seek God first, then your spouse.
 - 9. Keep working on communication.
 - 10. Have fun together.
 - 11. Be willing to compromise.
 - 12. Avoid sharp words. Be kind and build up with your words.