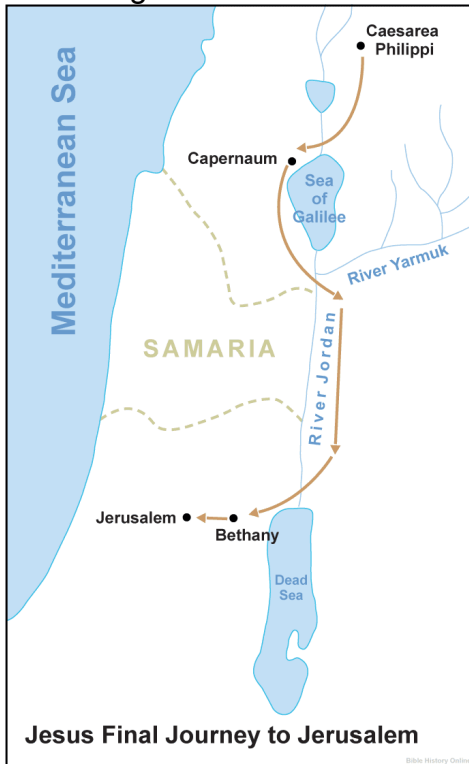


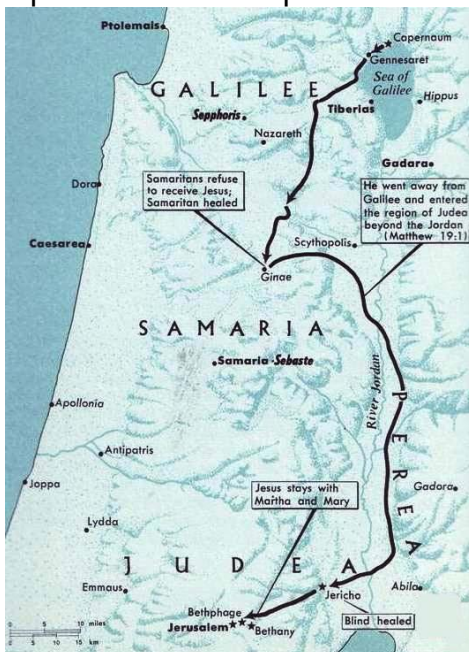
Matthew 19:7-12 “God’s View of Divorce”

9.24.17

It’s finally time! It’s finally time for Jesus to head to Jerusalem and His meeting with a cross and death on a hillside called Calvary. It will take Jesus a few weeks to ultimately end up in Jerusalem, but He’ll get there. You will remember the map we showed you last week.



Jesus has finished His teaching and healing ministry in Galilee and He leaves Galilee and is now headed south for Jerusalem. However, (and Matthew doesn’t record this, but Luke does), Jesus would stop on the border of Samaria, and heal the 10 lepers...see the map...



But, He did not go through Samaria, even though it was the quickest route to Jerusalem. Now we don’t know for sure why. Some say the Samaritans didn’t permit Him to go through Samaria, but we don’t know that for sure. Nonetheless He decides to go

through Perea on the East Side. And while He goes through there He continues to draw huge crowds and He heals along the way. What a massive entourage that had to be!

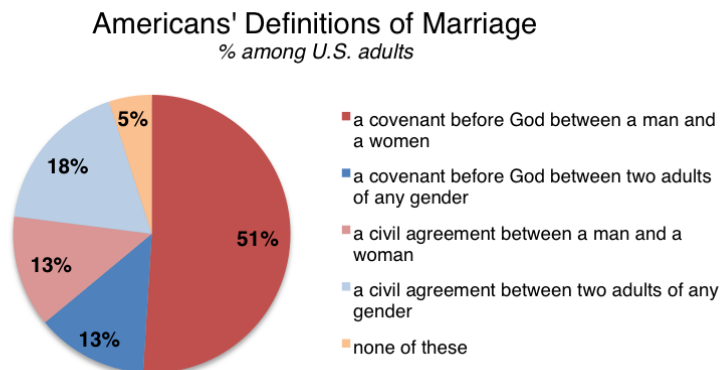
Ultimately, He'll end up in Jerusalem in a few weeks and be betrayed, beaten and then crucified. But, along the way, the Pharisees show up again and seek to find another way to trap Him by using the OT Mosaic Law to trip Him up. Hey folks, that's like me playing Michael Jordan in a game of one on one...I'm going to get beaten EVERY TIME!

Yet, the Pharisees seek try to trip up Jesus on the issue of marriage and divorce. Pastor Dale covered, last week, the topic of marriage and God's design, and today we'll see Jesus deal with the question of divorce. Follow along with me...

Matthew 19:7-12

⁷They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" ⁸He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." ¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."¹¹ But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. ¹²For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

Now as we begin to break down this passage about divorce, I believe it's prudent to understand the state of marriage and divorce in America. First, marriage... According to Barna Research, the institution of marriage is not held in very high regard any longer in America.



Only 51% of Americans believe marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman. 18% say it's a covenant between two adults of any gender. Unfortunately, I believe these numbers will continue to get worse over time as the culture continues to reject the Bible and embrace paganism.

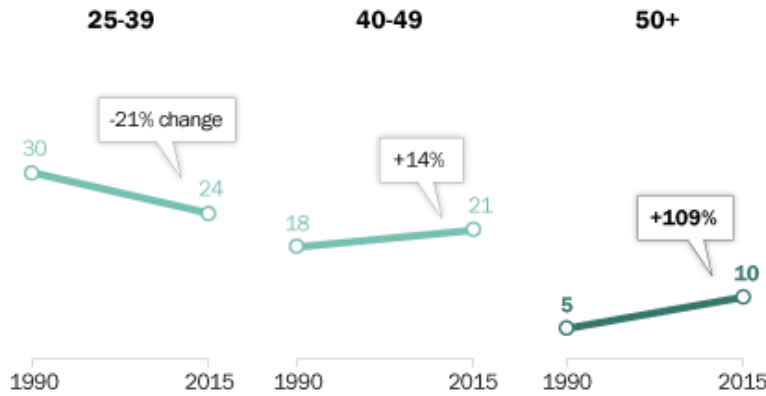
It's also interesting what's happening with divorce in America. It's actually going down. Why? Cohabitation. The stigma of people living together outside of marriage in America is basically gone. In many ways, it's simply all about economics. Why? Because the Federal Government actually discourages marriage by allowing many government subsidies for ladies and their children who aren't married.

I want to show you something else that's very interesting regarding divorce. According to Pew Research, divorce has actually doubled for those 50 and older in the past 27 years. See the right

side of the chart...

Divorce rate for adults ages 50 and older has roughly doubled in the past 25 years

Number of persons who divorced per 1,000 married persons in given age group



Note: Divorce rate is the number of persons who divorced per 1,000 married persons in the year prior to the survey among adults in that age group. Percent change calculated before rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2015 American Community Survey (IPUMS) and 1990 Vital Statistics following the methodology in Brown and Lin's "The Gray Divorce Revolution: Rising Divorce Among Middle-Aged and Older Adults, 1990-2010."

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

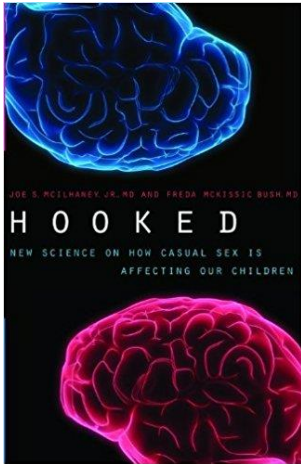
The number of those 50 and older getting divorced has gone from just 5% to 10% in the last 27 years. But, get this...see the left side of the chart. Those in the age range of 25-39 getting divorced has gone down 21%! Again, that's because of cohabitation. While folks in their 40's, who get divorced has actually gone up 14%.

Church family, I've shared this many times...but, there's a lot of new people in the church, and they need to know this as well. Whether we care to admit or not, we've been programming ourselves for divorce by how we've chosen to have relationships in our modern-day society. I call it "Loosing our Sticky." See the sticky note?



Just how many times can you tear off a sticky note before it no longer sticks? Hmm!!!??

Folks, that is an analogy of the evidence of neuroscience regarding relationship making today...like the book: "Hooked," by Doctors McIlhaney and Bush.



Neuroscientists tell us, the brain releases powerful hormone endorphins called dopamine from our pituitary gland during the process of relationship making and bonded connections are made in the brain because of that. The problem is, when that connection is broken and the relationship is ended, that part of the brain will struggle going forward to be able to reach that same connection or bonded level of commitment. You begin to lose your sticky.

Those connections, by the way, come from our Creator, God, who placed that pituitary gland inside of our brains and those endorphins (aka, pleasure hormones) are what causes bonding to take place. That's why relationship breakups are SO VERY HARD. And it's these **repeated, multiple breakups in our relationships before marriage**, that make it much harder to bond later in life with a future spouse. The sticky note has lost it's sticky.

The truth is, church family, with all of our relationship baggage that we bring into our marriages, we've been practicing divorce for 10-15 years and just because we put on a wedding band, doesn't mean that practice will stop. As my old ball coach used to say: YOU PLAY LIKE YOU PRACTICE. The average number of serious relationships before marriage today is 5-8. And we start young!

Oh, I encourage parents to heed the advice of Solomon, who said: "Don't awaken love too soon." It might seem cute to take your 14 year old to the movies with another 14-year-old and drop them off at the theater...but understand, chemicals are being released in their brains and connections are being made...and even if the relationship never turns physical...those bonds, when broken...because they likely will be broken...most 14 year olds don't eventually get married...well, it will make it harder for them to bond with their future mater.

Yes, I believe we have a wrong understanding of God's perfect design for marriage...one man for one woman for life. You know God brought only Eve to Adam. There was no other choice for Adam. And I believe God will also bring that person into the lives of our young people just as He placed the stars in orbit. He's God and He doesn't need our help. But, I'm no fool. I've been teaching this for 12 years and by and large it falls on deaf ears. So, I know how the cookie crumbles. I know I'm going to be dealing with many broken-hearted young people and many marriages on the rocks. It is what it is. And I believe that's how Jesus felt and why He said this...

Matthew 19:8

8 He said to them, "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

It's for our stubbornness and hard heartedness that God made the exception to Moses regarding

divorce. God never intended for divorce to be a part of the human experience and it grieves Him when we harden our hearts and break the covenant of marriage that He created. He hates divorce! Malachi 2 records that sentiment in verse 16. Yes, God hates divorce. Yet, there is a divorce in the United States every 13 seconds. So, we must see what God says to us regarding divorce. **Look at verse 9** and we'll see the exception Jesus gives us for why we can divorce.

Matthew 19:9

⁹And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

So, according to Jesus, if you get rid of your spouse for any other reason than adultery and you remarry, you are living in adultery. That's what Jesus said and it's that simple. Jesus was seeking to raise marriage back up to where it belonged...in the highest regard and with the highest and greatest respect possible. That's why preacher's say in marriage ceremonies: "The state of marriage is not to be entered into lightly" Why? Because you are making a covenant with God. "WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN SEPARATE."

The disciples heard this and came to the conclusion...it's not worth even getting married. See it...

Matthew 19:10

¹⁰The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

Now remember, scholars tell us that likely for all the apostles, with the exception of Peter, were NOT married and they heard Jesus say all of this and said... "It's not worth it!" But, that's not what Jesus was saying. He wasn't saying, "Don't get married." He was saying, "Don't take it lightly." **See it in verse 11.**

Matthew 19:11

11 But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. Jesus was saying, "Being single is a gift." And the Apostle Paul would say the same thing in 1 Corinthians 7. **Would you turn there with me to 1 Corinthians 7?** We're going to be spend quite a bit of time here... because it's a companion passage. As you are turning, let me say this...

The Apostle Paul was writing back to the Corinthian church about marriage and singleness and divorce because so many people were beings saved from pagan backgrounds that had no understanding about God's design for marriage or singleness, or how to properly discuss divorce. Watch what the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to write about singleness (remember he was single):

1 Corinthians 7:7-9

⁷I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. ⁸To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. ⁹But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Single people in the room... Don't wish your singleness away. Maybe you do want to get married...that's fine...but, understand...there are seasons for everything. Don't pine away...don't wish your life away thinking you've got to have a boyfriend or girlfriend or that you've got to be married by a certain age.

AND PLEASE...please don't settle...don't just settling for someone because you're in a rush and that person is not God's will for your life. Trust the Lord for this season of time in your life. He knows what He's doing!

Paul describes the advantages of being single...

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

³² I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³ But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴ and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. ³⁵ I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

What's he saying? Simple. Being single is okay. Embrace for the season that God gifts you with it! **Now go back to Matthew 19, verse 12** and we'll see three examples Jesus gives regarding singleness.

Matthew 19:12

12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

You might ask, "What is a eunuch?" Well, you might remember the Eunuch that Philip led to Christ in Acts 8. See the artist's depiction of that scene...



Remember the Eunuch was part of Queen Candace's entourage...the Queen of Ethiopia.

Now listen, and understand this: Eunuch's were castrated males or those incapable of reproduction due to a birth defect. A eunuch was often someone who was a servant or an adviser to a King or a Queen and in order to keep them from any potential sexual interaction with the Queen or anyone in...let's say a King or Queen's family...like their daughters, those males, working in those positions, were often made Eunuchs.

Now, Jesus identified three types of "eunuchs" in verse 12. Those "born that way", those forced to be eunuchs, like I just described. Then there are the **natural eunuchs** were those who are born with a physical defect. But, a **Voluntary eunuch**, those were individuals...who, in order to better serve the Lord, in some capacity, choose to forego marriage. Those individuals chose to remain celibate.

So what was Jesus teaching? Well, He was saying there are some with the gifting and the ability to remain celibate for life and do the work of ministry. Others don't have this gift. I don't! That's why

I'm thankful for my wonderful bride! The point Jesus is making is that celibacy is an option.

Now let me say this as well. Some people try to use this passage to teach that Jesus was speaking of homosexuals in verse 12. In fact, some LGBT groups argue that Jesus was referring to homosexuals when He mentioned eunuchs who were "born that way." However, remember, Scripture interprets Scripture. The Bible never uses the words "homosexual" and "eunuchs" interchangeably. Furthermore, eunuchs are never referred to in Scripture as being individuals who are living in sin. Yet, the Bible universally describes homosexuality (contrary to what the world says...and the Supreme Court), God's word says, the practice homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle. Just like adultery, fornication, or cohabitation. It's all sin! But, Jesus says celibacy is an option...even for those who say they are homosexual.

Let's say for instance that you have someone who is struggling with homosexual tendencies. The truth is, celibacy is an option for them, or for anyone else, for that matter. Hey, and that even includes the single, college student and single high school students. Celibacy is an option. It's God will that we live holy lives, 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and holiness should be the norm for a follower of Christ.

Yes, I know there is great discussion today about whether or not someone with homosexual tendencies can be cured and brought through those temptations. Some, (and this is even in some Christian circles), say, "It's not possible." I disagree. Jesus can deliver us from all sin...be that an adulterer, drunk, drug addict, porn addict, food addict, or someone like me. He can help anyone overcome sin.

Surely Jesus' death on the cross and the power of His resurrection is stronger than any sin! Therefore, I believe homosexuality is not some "super sin" that can't be healed. It's sin...but, no greater than any other sin...and the blood of Jesus Christ is stronger and more powerful than ANY sin. So, Jesus' teaching here is simply this: celibacy is always an option for anyone.

Now, I want you to **turn back with me to 1 Cor. chapter 7**, because this (again) is the companion passage in the NT on the teaching of divorce and it's here that we get the scenarios that many of you ask me about. **Look at verse 39**, and let's look at 3 scenarios: **#1 Can a Christian, who is married to another Christian, remarry if their spouse dies?** Yes, here's why...

1 Corinthians 7:39

39A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

So, the answer is: "Yes." A Christian, is biblically released from their spouse at death and you are permitted to marry again...BUT let it be another Christian (someone who is "in the Lord"). No other conditions are permitted for the release of one Christian spouse from another. Listen, "falling out of love," because you don't have some Nicolas Sparks novel going on...is not a condition for divorce. That is a modern-day excuse that has zero biblical-basis. Marriage takes work! Yet, I've heard all kinds of excuses why people say, "I've got to divorce!" Like these:

1. "My spouse is a huge disappointment. I deserve better. He/she isn't my soulmate"
2. "God wouldn't want me to be unhappy" (The Cinderella Effect)
3. "All my friends say that I ought to leave him/her"
4. "My marriage is a constant struggle"

Marriage has been described as the anvil that God often uses to make us into the disciples He wants us to be.

Scenario #2 Can a Christian married to a non-Christian divorce? Look at verse 13.

1 Corinthians 7:13

13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

What does this mean? The Bible teaches that we're encouraged to stay together if the "lost/unsaved" spouse desires to stay in the marriage. But what if they leave?

1 Corinthians 7:15

15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

Listen, if the "unbelieving" spouse does decide to leave, then the Christian, is in what I call "a holding pattern." Why? Because, the goal is still to reconcile if possible. However, if that lost spouse commits adultery, while separated, that Christian spouse is no longer obligated to seek to stay with that person. But, even then...you're not commanded by Scripture to divorce. You can still work it out. It has been done. Did you notice the last sentence of verse 15?

1 Corinthians 7:15b

...God has called you to peace.

That last phrase, "God has called you to peace" is important and begs the answer to the final scenario... **#3 What about abuse or if the marriage is intolerable (Can there be divorce?)**

Well, church family, let me hasten to say that I am convinced that no woman, nor her family should ever stay in a situation that she fears for her safety or for her children. Because, as we just read, a time of separation does not equate to divorce. So, ma'am, if you find yourself in an abusive situation, time and space are usually the best options to bring about the need for counseling and for help and any potential reconciliation. Get out and be safe!

So, let's be clear, based on 1 Corinthians 7:15...(again, using the scenario of a lady)...Ma'am...if you leave, or separate, or even eventually divorce your unbelieving spouse because of abuse or it's simply intolerable, then you are to remain unmarried in the hopes that you may eventually be reconciled to your spouse. In fact verses 10 and 11, make this point even more clearly...

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

10 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband 11 (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

You see Church Family, reconciliation is always the goal. It's always the goal! It doesn't always work out that way...but, it's always the Goal!

So, the Bible is clear. If there is adultery, you have the **option** to divorce; yet, the Bible still doesn't give us a **command** that we MUST divorce. Because, if the adulterer repents, then you can choose to take the person back. (Just like when God took back the nation of Israel over and over again in the OT.)

You know the story, over and over again, in the OT God took back his people...a people who continued to commit spiritual adultery with the surrounding nations and their gods. Oh what a merciful, patient and long-suffering God we serve!

As we close today, maybe you're here today and you've been through a divorce. What does that mean for you? Let's say you divorced and you didn't have biblical grounds for it... No adultery was committed. Let's say, they left you. Hey folks, there are many scenarios...too many to go through them all case by case. **The message is this: be holy where you are.** If you've messed up...then, ask for forgiveness and live from this point forward in holiness, according to the Scriptures. You can't do anything about the past. The past, is the past! You can simply learn from it!

What did Jesus tell the woman caught in adultery? "Go and sin no more." Ask for forgiveness and don't do it again. Remember, God forgave David, when David confessed his sin after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Yes, God took back the nation of Israel and He will receive anyone who comes to Him in confession and repentance.

You know Church family, we're the bride of Christ (that's how Jesus see us)! We're betrothed to Him and one day there'll be a marriage in heaven, where Jesus will be married to His bride and there will be a grand reception: The Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Praise be to God for the fact that Jesus is not going to divorce us because He said, "I'll never leave you, nor forsake... but I'll be you until the end of time! Praise His Name.
