

"God's Standards for the Family"

Matthew 5:31-32

Introduction: Now last week we looked at Matthew 5:27-30 where Jesus focused upon the subject of purity. The bottom line of His teaching in this text was that any sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage are forbidden by God. Jesus went on to say that the act and the thoughts of fornication or adultery are such an offence against God that we are to cut off anything that would lead us into that sin.

Our study tonight will follow right on the same thought of purity but it will be considered in a different light. In the verses we shall look at tonight Jesus is going to speak on the subject of marriage and divorce.

Before we get too far into our study tonight let just make a few things clear, I know there are people here that have been divorced and remarried and I want you to know that if that is you God does not view you as second class Christians. You are to treat the marriage you are in as if it is the only marriage you were ever a part of. I am not here to cause you to feel shame and guilt but I am here to speak to you the very Truth that Jesus spoke on the subjects of marriage and divorce.

To help prepare your mind tonight I want to share with you an article which was quoted by a Bible teacher. I have used the teacher's words as well as the words in the article.

"In 1979 there was an article in *Christianity Today Magazine* that was written by Doctor Armond Nicoli II, who is a psychiatrist, a Medical Doctor on the faculty of Harvard Medical School. Doctor Nicoli had some very interesting thoughts on the family and I want to share those thoughts with you. Notice his words, "*Certain trends prevalent today*

*will incapacitate the family, destroy its integrity and cause its members to suffer such crippling emotional conflicts that they will become an intolerable burden to society. If any one factor influences the character development and emotional stability of an individual, it is the quality of the relationship he or she experiences as a child with **both** parents. Conversely if people suffering from severe non-organic emotional illness have one experience in common, it is the absence of a parent through death, divorce, etc. A parent's inaccessibility either physically, emotionally or both can profoundly influence a child's emotional health." And I want to stop right there to say this, what this psychiatrist is saying is, that most people who have non-organic, that is they're not physically, induced illness, but who have emotionally induced illness have in common a common denominator and that is a wrong relationship in their childhood to their parents. And Nicoli goes on to suggest that if we come up with a society without families, we will have such mental and emotional monsters in the next generation that there will be no way possible for society to cope with them. He further says, "What has been shown to contribute most to the emotional development of the child is a close, warm, sustained and continuous relationship with both parents. Yet, certain trends in our society make this most difficult."*

He then goes on to suggest what these trends are, and I want you to notice what he says. He lists the trends that are causing the destruction of the family, the trends that are going to cause a generation of emotional cripples. Number one, in the list that I want to give you, married women with children working outside the home. Notice his words, "My clinical experience indicates clearly that no women with young children can do both at the same time, without sacrificing either the quality of work or the quality of child care."

Another tendency, he says, in our society that is going to cripple the next generation is the tendency for families to move frequently. He

says," 50% of the U. S. population lived at a different address 5 years ago. Consequently young people have no sense of roots, have no concept of extended friendships." Another one, he says, "Another trend that is going to destroy the family as we know it and cause emotional cripples is the invasion of television into the home. One fifth of the lifetime of the next generation will be spent watching television." If you live to be 80 years of age and you're average, you will have watched television a total of four thousand days of your life. Creating a tremendous impact, and since as we know television is part of the system and the system is to tear down the family, you will have a total of four thousand days of anti-family propaganda at one level or another.

Nicoli says, there is another trend that has the same effect and it is, "The lack of controls in our society." And what he means by this is that we don't have any moral standards. And when a society has no moral standards what invariably results is deep moral confusion. And when you have deep moral confusion in the life of an individual you will have a tremendous amount of guilt, and a tremendous amount of guilt leads people to, to compensate for it by aberrant behavior. He further points out that "no standards in a society will cause people to be unable to control their impulses, there will be a rise in violent crimes, there will be a wildness to our sex activities, homosexuality and perversion will literally go crazy in the next generation."

Further, he says, "Another trend that is doing the same thing is a lack of communication in the home." A study in a small town in the United States indicated that the average father spent an average of 37 seconds a day with his young sons. No communication. Well there are some trends that Nicoli pointed out. Married women with children working outside the home, the tendencies for families to move frequently, the invasion of television, the lack of controls in our society, a lack of communication in the home, all of those contribute to

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the breakdown of the family which will create a generation of emotionally misfit people.

But the first one in his list I haven't mentioned yet. The number one cause of emotional problems in the lives of the next generation is divorce. Nicoli says this, "The trend toward quick and easy divorce and the ever increasing divorce rate subjects more and more children to physically and emotionally absent parents. The divorce rate has risen 700% in this century, and it continues to rise. There is now one divorce for every 1.8 marriages. Over 1 million children a year are involved in divorce cases, and 13 million children under 18 now have one or both parents missing." He sees divorce as the first problem in his list.

And he goes on to conclude this, what about the future, what can we expect if these trends continue? And here's his answer, "First, the quality of family life will continue to deteriorate, producing a society with a higher incidence of mental illness than ever before. 95% of our hospital beds will be taken up by mentally ill people. This illness will be characterized primarily by a lack of self-control. We can expect the assassination of people in authority to be frequent occurrences. Crimes of violence will increase, even those within the family, the suicide rate will rise. As sexuality becomes more unlimited more separated from family and emotionally commitment the deadening effect will cause more bizarre experimenting and widespread perversion."

I have chosen to use this article because I believe it sets the stage perfectly for what we are about to look at tonight.

There are many views on divorce and remarriage. Some say divorce is ok for any situation and others say it is only for certain situations and then others say it should never happen. Then there are the views on remarriage and some believe there is nothing wrong with remarriage and others believe it is ok in certain situations and then others believe

if your former spouse is alive you should not remarry. So the views differ greatly and depending on where you go for information you can find any of these views. But which is correct? Let me just say there are so many different views because man makes up his own standards to fit his own situation. That is exactly what sinners do when they cannot live up to God's standards they make their own standards which they can live up to so as to justify their own personal lifestyle. Therefore to get the correct view of divorce and remarriage we must not go to what man says but we must look at what the Word of God says for it is the Final Authority.

It is interesting that in our study tonight Jesus only needed two verses to clear up the matter on divorce and remarriage.

I. The Teaching of the Rabbis (5:31)

Notice Matthew 5:31

Jesus again points to the teaching of the Rabbis and their teaching on the subject of divorce. They taught that it was ok for a man to divorce his wife for any reason as long as he gave her a writing of divorcement.

Now these religious leaders were resting their teaching on the teaching of Moses.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

² *And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.*

³ *And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;*

⁴ *Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.*

In order to understand this passage we must know a little history. In the ancient Near East divorce was widespread. The practice had infiltrated into the nation of Israel and so Moses gave this passage in order to regulate an already existing practice. It was never God's plan for any marriage to experience divorce.

Matthew 19:7-8

⁷ *They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*

⁸ *He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

You see Moses permitted the divorce but it was never God's plan for a marriage to experience divorce.

This teaching of Moses was later accepted and used as a means to justify the fleshly desires of the Pharisees and they used it as a license to terminate a marriage for any cause. This acceptance has

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made its way down through the years and here we are today with 40 - 50 percent of first time marriages ending in divorce.

Even the famous Jewish historian, Josephus had been polluted with the false teaching of the Pharisees. Notice his words:

"The law runs thus: He that would be divorced from his wife, for any cause whatever, as many such causes there are, let him give her a bill of divorcement."

Let me tell you how the religious leaders of Jesus day as well as many others through the years have erred. The rabbis of Jesus day as well as many teachers and students today have come to believe that "divorce" actually dissolves a marriage. That is dead wrong. There is only one thing that will dissolve a marriage and that is death.

Romans 7:1-4

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

³ So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

⁴ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

In this text Paul is explaining to his readers how they are now loosed from the Law. It is through the death of Christ. To help us to understand the point he uses the marriage to and he makes it clear that only death can dissolve a marriage. A bill of divorcement with not dissolve a marriage.

That very Truth is seen in our next point.

II. The Teaching of Jesus (5:32)

Notice Matthew 5:32

Jesus tells us here that if anyone divorces his wife except for the cause of fornication HE is guilty of causing her to commit adultery. Now notice very closely, if the divorce would dissolve the marriage then she would not be able to commit adultery because she would no longer be bound to her husband. Therefore, from the very words of Jesus we can see that divorce does NOT dissolve a marriage.

Now some would ask, "How is the husband guilty of causing her to commit adultery?" Because he sent her away from the marriage and when she marries another she then commits adultery. Jesus even goes deeper in this verse to show that divorce does not dissolve a marriage for he says that whosoever marries her that is divorced is guilty of committing adultery. Again we can see the only thing that will terminate a marriage is death.

Now I want you to also notice that Jesus is not saying that it is ok to divorce the woman who is guilty of fornication. He is saying that for a man to divorce his wife for any reason other than fornication makes him guilty of causing her to commit adultery. If she has committed fornication then she is already guilty of the sin of adultery and so the

guilt is on her and not him. Jesus is showing the consequences of divorce and the danger of following the teaching of the rabbis. He is by no means giving anyone permission to divorce their spouse.

Let me show you some other passages to support what I am saying.

Mark 10:2-12

² And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

³ And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

⁴ And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

⁵ And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

⁶ But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

⁷ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

⁸ And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

⁹ What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

¹⁰ And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

¹¹ And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

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12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Luke 16:18

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

Conclusion:

There is much more that could be said about this subject but we are out of time. I do want to make something clear for you. There are times when divorce happens and the believer may have no control over that for it may be demanded by the spouse. Sadly it happens all the time. When that occurs the believer who desires to make it work and does all they can to make it work is not at fault. But that believer must understand that the divorce has NOT dissolved the marriage. In God's eyes they are still married. The divorce for that believer is not sin but a remarriage would be.

Now if you are divorced and remarried you are not 2nd class. You need to stay where you are and treat that marriage as though it is the only marriage you have ever been in.