



# Mid-Week

Bible Study and Prayer  
Wednesdays 6:45pm – 8pm



Good Hope Baptist Church

Pastor Josh Franklin

## When the New Deal Replaces the Ordeal

(Exposing Adultery in the Heart pt. 2)

**Matthew 5:27-32 (NKJV)** *[with my notes]*

<sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

<sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

<sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

<sup>31</sup> "**Furthermore** *[Jesus is amplifying his discussion on adultery. He does not intend to give a thorough understanding of divorce and remarriage here, but rather divorce as it applies to adultery.]* **it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'** <sup>32</sup> **But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery *[that is, if she remarries]* ; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced *[that is, a woman who has been divorced for something short of unchastity]* commits adultery.**

When couples get married today:

- a. They first look for an Ideal
- b. But after a while, their ideal becomes an Ordeal
- c. Then they begin to look for a New Deal.

That is, if things do not work out to their selfish satisfaction, they get a divorce and justify it by saying the person has changed from the person they married.

A father was driving home late one evening when he suddenly realizes that it is his daughter's birthday and that he hasn't bought her anything. Out the corner of his eye he sees a shopping mall, and pulling his car through three lanes of traffic, finds a parking spot and runs into the mall. After a frantic search he finds a toy store, goes inside and attracts the attention of a salesman. When asked what he would like, he simply says "a Barbie doll." The salesman looks at him in the particularly condescending manner that only salesmen can muster and asks "Which Barbie would that be, sir?" As the would be shopper looked disconcerted the assistant continues, "We have: Barbie Goes to the Gym for \$19.95. Barbie Goes to the Ball for \$19.95. Barbie Goes Shopping for \$19.95. Barbie Goes to the Beach for \$19.95. Barbie Goes Night Clubbing for \$19.95, and Divorced Barbie for \$265.00." The man can't help himself and asks, "Why is Divorced Barbie \$265.00 when all the other Barbies are

selling for \$19.95?" "That's obvious! **Divorced Barbie comes with Ken's house, Ken's car, Ken's furniture ...**"<sup>1</sup>

The president of the National Institute of Healthcare Research has said, "Being divorced and a nonsmoker is only slightly less dangerous than smoking a pack or more of cigarettes a day and staying married. Every type of terminal cancer strikes divorced individuals of either sex, both white and non-white, more frequently than it does married people."<sup>2</sup>

The historical context of this issue is instructive as two competing rabbinic schools of thought were present in Jesus' day.

- 1) The more conservative school followed Rabbi Shammai and said the only ground for divorce was the indecency of adultery (sexual immorality).
- 2) The more liberal school followed Rabbi Hillel and said divorce could be granted for "any indecency" which included many more causes beyond adultery.

The Pharisees in that day, for the most part, followed Rabbi Hillel, made divorce easy and wanted it to stay that way. So they come to Jesus "to test him" (v. 2). Four times this word "test" is used in Mark. Three times it is applied to the Pharisees (8:11; 10:2; 12:15). The other is to Satan (1:13)! As Satan twisted Scripture, so did these religious leaders. Here, they are doing it again. Jesus was, therefore, thrust into a debate like many of us are today. So, let's try and get a handle on all this. As we shall see at the end of our study, ***the Pharisees wanted to talk about divorce, but Jesus wanted to talk about marriage and God's divine blueprint.*** Jesus knew His Moses, the Pharisees didn't!

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To understand our Lord's statements on divorce, we must know something of the controversial social and theological context in which he made them. The controversy centered over the interpretation of a phrase in [Deuteronomy 24:1](#), the stated ground of divorce: "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce..."

That verse taught that a husband could divorce his wife if he found "something indecent" in her, and that is where the controversy lay. The burning question in Jesus' day was, what does "something indecent" mean?" Those in the very liberal rabbinical school of Hillel interpreted "indecent" in the widest manner possible. They said a man could divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner! They also extended "indecent" to mean a wife's walking around with her hair down, speaking to men in the streets, or speaking disrespectfully of her husband's parents in his presence. A wrong word about a mother-in-law and a woman could be out on the street! Rabbi Akiba, who was of this school of thought, went even further, saying that the phrase "becomes displeasing to him" ("she find no favor in his eyes," כִּי־וָ) meant that a man could divorce his wife if he found a woman who was more beautiful. Such husbands were bigoted and arrogant.

Fortunately, they were opposed by the school of Shammai, which limited "indecent" to offenses of marital impropriety short of adultery. "Indecent" did not refer to adultery, which was punished by execution, but rather suggested other types of sexual misconduct such as shameful exposure. This conservative-liberal controversy over the meaning of "indecent" as a grounds for divorce was the

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<sup>1</sup> Lowell D. Streiker, *Nelson's Big Book of Laughter: Thousands of Smiles from A to Z*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 126.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Rainey, *Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families: Eight Big Ideas for Church Leaders*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, Swindoll Leadership Library (Nashville, TN: Word, 2001), 237–239.

backdrop of the Pharisees' coming to Jesus about this matter. [Matthew 19:3](#) describes the situation: "Some Pharisees came to test him. They asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?'"

Now, what I would like to do is survey the Bible and see exactly what it says about divorce.

## **I. Divorce: A Look At The Key Biblical Text With Theological Observations.**

### **1) Read Gen 2:18-25.**

- Marriage is a good gift from a great God to be enjoyed. Sex is also a part of this good gift.
- God's design is one man for one woman for a lifetime (unless separated by death; Rom 7:1-3). Marriage is the joining of two bodies, the conjoining of two wills, the bonding of two minds, and the union of two sets of God-given emotions. Marriage is sacred because it reflects the spiritual union of Christ and His Church, the believer and His Savior (Eph. 5:21-33). As Jesus would never divorce His bride, a spouse should never divorce their mate. ***"The ultimate meaning of marriage is the representation of the covenant keeping love between Christ and His church" (Piper).***

### **2) Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4.**

- Though the Bible never condones divorce, it does recognize the reality of divorce (cf. also Is. 50:1; Jer. 3:1, 8-9). The allowance of a bill of divorce provides regulation and is a concession for the protection and welfare of an innocent victim (in the historical context, a woman's "put away" status left her in a precarious situation, perhaps leading to either starvation or prostitution). Remarriage to one's former spouse after marrying another is strictly forbidden.

### **3) Read Ezra 10:2-4, 10-12.**

- This appears to be a unique situation (though nowhere does God give a direct command to divorce. The text may be recording their activity but not affirming it.) Some believe polygamy was an issue, though the text does not explicitly say this. In the best light, this is an exceptional act eliminating the greater of two evils: defilement through mixed marriages which led to idolatry.

### **4) Read Malachi 2:13-16.**

- God hates divorce. It is never His perfect will.

### **5) Read Matthew 19:1-12.**

- Jesus affirms God's original design for marriage. Jesus states that divorce is the result of sin and the hardness of men's hearts.
- Jesus says divorce is permitted in a case of sexual immorality. Jesus seems to imply permission to remarry.

### **6) Read Mark 10:1-12.**

- This passage parallels Matthew 19:1-12 but it is more abbreviated. There is an important omission of the words "except for sexual immorality" in vv. 11-12. Mark's account is simply a summation of the more lengthy account of Matthew and assumes the "except for sexual immorality" understanding.

### **7) Luke 16:18, "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." This is an even more concise account of the Matt. 19 and Mark 10 passages.**

## 8) Read Romans 7:1-3.

- Paul reaffirms (like Jesus) God's original design for marriage – for life.

## 9) Read 1 Corinthians 7:7-9; 10-16; 39-40.

- Paul affirms the positive nature of the single life. Paul says it is better to marry than to burn with lust (and possibly fall into sexual immorality). God's desire for troubled marriages is always reconciliation. God's desire for those separated in marriage is to be reconciled or remain separated.

## II. Some Basic Observations About Divorce

- 1) In dealing with this difficult issue, our goal must be to be biblical and not emotional in our position.  
*We should also emphasize prevention and not be reactionary. The latter is difficult, especially for those who have experienced the pain of divorce in some way.*
- 2) God's intent is one man joined to one woman for a lifetime. This is His perfect will for every marriage.
- 3) God hates divorce. Mal. 2:13-16
- 4) God's desire is that troubled marriages would be reconciled. Divorce is never commanded or desired by God. Separation is sometimes deemed wise (1 Cor. 7:10-11).
- 5) I believe divorce may be biblically permissible in the cases of:
  - a) sexual immorality
  - b) desertion by an unbeliever
  - c) For some, if the divorce was pre-conversion (2 Cor. 5:17). Again, reconciliation is God's first desire.
- 6) Where reconciliation is not possible, permission to remarry in the Lord would be allowed.
- 7) Regardless, divorce is not the unpardonable sin. Though consequences often remain, God's forgiveness is available to those who have caused the break-up of their homes.

## III. Conclusion Thoughts:

- 1) Marriage is a gift and work of God that receives its meaning and significance from God.
- 2) God's design for marriage is exclusively heterosexual and unique among all human relationships (10:6-7).
- 3) God's plan from the beginning is that marriage would be permanent and indissoluble (10:9). Indeed Malachi 2:16 reminds us, "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."
- 4) Jesus acknowledges that because we live in a fallen world and have hard hearts, divorce will occur (10:3-4). However, no divorce is ever necessary though it may be occasionally permissible to those whose divorce is on biblical grounds.
- 5) To divorce one's mate (without a biblical cause) and remarry another is to commit the sin of adultery (10:11-12).

## Make Your Marriage Divorce Proof

- Enter Life Long Covenant
- Engage in Loving Communication. Avg. couple talks 37 minutes a week out of 10,000 minutes.  
Dialogue daily and date weekly
- Engage in Loyal Communication
- Read the Bible together, pray together, and go to Church together (remember the introduction from weeks past)

One survey out of *Marriage and Divorce Magazine* (March, 1980) said one out of every three marriages end in divorce. If the two married at a church wedding, one out of 50 end in divorce. Where both husband and wife attend church regularly, read their Bibles, and pray together, one out of 1,005 end in divorce.

More and more people seem to forget Henry Ford's sage advice when asked on his 50th wedding anniversary for his rule for marital bliss and longevity. He replied, "Just the same as in the automobile business, stick to one model."

### Stats for the Crisis

1. In America, on average 3,571 families end in divorce each day of the year.
2. America's divorce rates have more than doubled since 1960's.
3. Currently, more marriages are terminated by divorce than by death of a spouse.
4. 1,000,000 a year see their parents divorce.
5. 35% of our nation's children live apart from their biological father.
6. 50% of children who do not live with their father have never stepped foot in their father's home.
7. Children in single-parent homes have a 300% greater possibility of a negative life outcome than children raised in homes where both parents are present.
8. Among evangelicals, internet pornography is now a major factor in the dissolving of families and a departure from ministry.

The tragedy is that most 2<sup>nd</sup> marriages last half the time of the first. Do you know what Elizabeth Taylor said to her 7<sup>th</sup> husband? She said, "**Honey, I won't keep you long.**"

Show me any couple who comes to the marriage altar and who says in the back of their minds, "If this doesn't work, we can always get a divorce." That couple has the highest potential of becoming divorced. But show me a couple who come to the altar saying, "Divorce is not in our vocabulary, we've thrown away the parachute, that we say, "I Josh, take you Lydia, etc.- this couple's marriage will last. Example: *Someone asked Billy Graham's wife, "Have you ever considered a divorce?" She said, "No, not a divorce, but I have considered murder."*

Divorce, we now know, is even more traumatic than losing a spouse or parent by death. John Piper is right, "Death is usually clean pain. Divorce is usually dirty pain." Kelly Clarkson, 1st American Idol winner, saw her parents divorce at age 6. Its effect? Her own words in an interview: "I know people probably think I've been heartbroken, because of the stuff I've sung and written," she says. "I love my friends and my family. But I have never said the words "I love you" to anyone in a romantic relationship. I'm not keen on marriage. Men come and go." Recalling her own parents' divorce when she was just 6, Clarkson acknowledges that she fears betrayal.

Few issues have caused me more grief, soul searching and study than what the Bible says about divorce. Many believers are as casual about divorce and remarriage as are their lost friends and neighbors. In a culture that bears proudly the motto, "I have the right to be happy," "serial polygamy" is considered a right and quite normal. Never mind that bodies are strewn everywhere, especially the children, and that happiness is even more elusive for those in subsequent marriages. Say what you want, facts remain a hard thing to deny. Just listen, as one of thousands of examples, to a poem penned by a little girl that won a poetry contest in the 9-13 age category in a town in New Jersey in 1999,

**The Monster**  
***The monster's here / The monster's there / The monster is just everywhere.***  
***In my milk, In my tea, / Doesn't it ever think of me?***  
***Mom's here, Dad's there, / And I'm just not anywhere!***  
***How can I say this, Without any force; / The monster is called Divorce!***

The February 1973 issue of *McCall's* magazine carried an article entitled, "Is Anyone Faithful Anymore?" in which the author included the following story. A young wife was at lunch with eleven of her friends, who had been meeting together regularly to study French since their children had been in nursery school. As they conversed, one of the women, the group's leader, asked, "How many of you have been faithful throughout your marriage?" Only one woman at the table raised her hand. That evening when the young wife told her husband about the conversation, she revealed that she was *not* the one who had raised her hand. He was shocked and devastated. "But I *have* been faithful," she added. "Then why didn't you raise your hand?" She replied, "I was ashamed."

I think no one would disagree that our contemporary culture is not intrinsically receptive to Biblical teaching regarding sexual relationships, marriage, and divorce. Because of this hostility, some preachers seem reluctant to speak out on these issues. Other ministers hesitate to address these topics because there is major disagreement about divorce in the church. Because there are numerous opinions as to what the Bible means, because the subject is complex, and because contemporary marital relationships are often incredibly tangled mazes, the subject becomes overwhelming. Sadly, we sometimes find it easier to just leave it unaddressed.

Some surveys indicate that eight of ten people are either directly or indirectly affected by divorce. The mere mention of the word *divorce* is painful to some. Many have been deeply wounded by broken marriages, and a discussion of the subject brings up memories and feelings they would like to forget. For these reasons preachers find little joy in preaching on the subject. But since Jesus brought it up right in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, the greatest sermon ever preached, he obviously thinks it is an important subject, one we dare not ignore. To see this matter through Jesus' eyes is good for us as individuals, good for the church, and good for society.

What is to be the Christian's attitude regarding divorce? Is divorce always forbidden? Or is it sometimes allowable? What is the Christian position amidst the marital tragedy that surrounds us? As we answer these questions, I will try to be sensitive to those who are hurting. But at the same time I will do my best to be Biblical. The bottom line in all of this is, what does God's Word say?

#### **FOUR EXCUSES AMERICANS MAKE FOR DIVORCE<sup>3</sup>:**

- 1) **"The love has gone out of our marriage, therefore, we need to separate."** It's a lie from hell.
- 2) **"It would be far better for our children if we got a divorce than our children to live in this constant wrangling."** Well, sociologists have told us that divorce is seldom, if ever, a positive factor in the life of a child if you're talking about what is better for the child. I suggest you go ask the children and see what they think about it. Actually, you get the idea that, it's better for the children—really, basically, that is selfishness on your part. *You want to do what you want and, have what you want to have, and yet you pawn it off as better for the children.* And you say, "Well, the only two alternatives we have is divorce or over here with constant wrangling." Listen to me. There's a third alternative: You get your

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<sup>3</sup> Adrian Rogers, *The Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection – Sermons*, (North Palm Beach, FL: Adrian Rogers Foundation, 2011), Under: "Family Revival".

heart right with God and stop this wrangling, and don't use some silly excuse for it. The Bible says that we're to live peaceably with all men.

- 3) **"Well, I owe it to myself to be happy."** Friend, you owe it to yourself to keep your word when you made a marriage vow before Almighty God. And, by the way, you don't live in isolation. Your happiness is not the only thing that matters. Listen. When you say, "I want someone else so I'm going to be happy," do you know what you have said? "God, I don't care about Your commandments." Number two: You have defrauded your, partner that you've made a holy vow to. Number three: You have dishonored yourself, because you now have broken that vow and you have wounded your children. Another wrote this word. I want you to listen. **"A man who breaks up his home by adultery is telling his child, 'Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you.'"**
- 4) **"Well, I've prayed about it, and God has told me to get a divorce."** Oh, yes? You think that God has, changed His laws just for you, that you are a special exception? No. Listen. People who get divorces and people who don't get divorces normally have about the same kind of problems. It's how people react to those problems. There are no problems too big to solve; just people too small to solve them. We can solve a problem if we will attack the problem rather than one another. Now if you've got a bad marriage, one sermon is not going to change your marriage, and your marriage will not be healed overnight, but I tell you what you can do in this one service—you can change the direction of your marriage. Change the direction and you can begin to grow a marriage as God wants it to be. You can make that decision. What a tragedy it is when 10% of the marriage is in trouble and the other 90% goes down the drain because people are not mature enough to do what God wants them to do.

*We believe God's plan for marriage is that it be a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. We believe God hates divorce. We believe divorce brings harm to every person involved. Therefore, reconciliation of a marriage should be encouraged and divorce discouraged. We also believe that God allows for divorce in certain situations, not because He wills it, but because of the hardness of people's hearts. We believe the Bible teaches that God allows for divorce in the case of adultery and in the case where an unbelieving spouse has chosen to abandon the commitment of marriage. We believe, however, that it is God's priority that marital oneness be restored and that, through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, forgiveness and reconciliation be experienced. We believe that in the unfortunate cases of abuse and abandonment, God has provided protection for an abused spouse and provision for child support through the church, civil law, godly counselors, prayer, and other practical measures. We believe God can restore broken people and broken marriages by His grace, by the power of His Spirit, and by His practical truths found in the Bible (Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mark 10:6–12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1–3; 13:1–5; 1 Corinthians 7:15).<sup>4</sup>*

**In the New Testament, the most common understanding among Protestant interpreters since the time of the Reformation has been that Jesus allowed divorce for the physical act of adultery and also allowed remarriage in such cases... But my own understanding of these passages, and the understanding of the majority of evangelical interpreters, is that the Bible allows (but does not require) divorce in the case of adultery or desertion, and it also allows remarriage to another person in such cases. Remarriage in these cases is not sin in God's sight.<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>4</sup> Dennis Rainey, *Ministering to Twenty-First Century Families: Eight Big Ideas for Church Leaders*, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, Swindoll Leadership Library (Nashville, TN: Word, 2001), 289.

<sup>5</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 219–220.