



What About Divorce?

Matthew 19:7-9

1. Why did Moses write about divorce? (verses 7-8)
2. What did Jesus say about divorce? (verse 9)
3. What about after a divorce?

Please open your Bibles to Matthew 19. We are continuing from where we left off last week. If you remember, last week, we saw the Pharisees coming to test Jesus by asking Him about a politically charged issue: the issue of divorce. It was politically charged, because Herod, the ruler over the region of Perea, had lustfully taken his brother's wife as his own. John the Baptist had made his stand that such a union was unlawful (Matt. 14:4). John the Baptist lost his head for such a stand. So when Jesus entered this same region, the Pharisees came along and attempted to trap Jesus with the same snare. The question came in verse 3, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" Last week we looked at Jesus' response in verses 4-6. Jesus said, ...

Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matt. 19:4-6)

Rather than dealing first with the issue of divorce, Jesus first dealt the issue of marriage, which we looked at last week. Jesus defined marriage. In verse 4, Jesus said that marriage should be one man and one woman. In verse 5, Jesus said that marriage should form a strong union. In verse 6, Jesus said that marriage should not be broken. We synthesized this into one statement: "God's plan for marriage is one man with one woman forming a strong union for life." Of course, this didn't satisfy the Pharisees, who were anticipating that Jesus would give His view on divorce, rather than on simply defining marriage. So they pressed a point with another question. They asked Jesus (in verse 7), "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" My message this morning derives its title from the essence of this question, "What about Divorce?" My outline this morning will be three questions: My first is the same as the Pharisees, ...

1. Why did Moses write about divorce? (verses 7-8)

Apart from the motives of the Pharisees, this is a very good question to ask. Perhaps the Pharisees moved from their goal of trapping Jesus to a genuine inquiry into the nature of marriage and divorce. After all, it appears as if Jesus has excluded divorce all together: "one man with one woman, forming a strong union for life." This brings up a question that is worth asking, "So, Jesus, what about divorce? How do you reconcile your statement concerning the strong union of marriage and how it shouldn't be ripped apart with the fact that divorce is a reality in the Bible?" The Pharisees pointed out that Moses instructed the people what to do when there was a divorce in the land. You could add further weight to this question by realizing that God, Himself, followed this command when He divorced Israel. Jeremiah 3:8, God said "I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce." (See also Isaiah 50:1). Divorce is a reality in the Bible and it is not always condemned as sinful (though often it is). In fact, there are times in which divorce is described as the right thing to do. When Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he planned "to put her away secretly" because he was a "righteous man" (Matt. 1:19). In other words, the righteous thing for Joseph to do was to divorce his wife. So, this is the question that is put before Jesus: **What about divorce?**

The best place to begin is by turning in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 24. In their second question about divorce, the Pharisees alluded to these verses. And Jesus will comment upon them. So, it will be well worth our while to look at what Moses actually said. I'm going to read the first four verses of Deuteronomy 24.

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance. (Deut. 24:1-4)

Like most of the law, these verses are a case study. Moses presents a situation and tells what ought to be done. He describes a man, marrying a woman. Yet, because of "some indecency in her," he divorces her. Formal divorce papers are written up. They are placed in her hand. She is sent from the house. With divorce papers in hand, this woman goes out and meets another man. They get married. Again, for some reason, the husband divorces her. According to custom, the divorce papers are written up. They are placed in her hand. She is sent from the house. In this case, the first husband cannot take her as a wife again. This is because, this woman has been defiled in the process.

In this passage, there are a couple of observations to note: First, **this passage doesn't address the grounds for divorce at all**. Moses was very vague as to the reason for this divorce. He said that the man has found "some indecency" in her. You might translate this phrase, "some nakedness" in her. It might have some reference to a sexual sin. It might have some reference to some type of shameful or embarrassing or indecent thing that was done. But the phrase in and of itself is very vague, which I believe is exactly the point. Moses isn't trying to determine when you can or cannot divorce your wife. He's not specifying any grounds for divorce.

Now, there were those in Jesus' day, who interpreted Deuteronomy 24 to be teaching about reasons for legitimate divorce. Some Rabbis thought that the "indecency" could be anything that you disliked, from the taste of the evening meal to the way she dressed that morning. This was the teaching of Josephus (Antiquities 4:8:23), who said, "He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatsoever (and many such causes happen among men) let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife any more." In other words, Josephus taught that God permitted divorce to take place for any reason at all. This philosophy can be seen in the Pharisees' original question: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" But, Deuteronomy 24 doesn't regulate how and when divorce is able to take place.

This leads to our second observation: **this passage nowhere commands a divorce to take place**. Rather, Moses is simply recognizing the reality that divorce will take place. When it takes place, for whatever reason, it comes with some stipulations. The goal of this passage is to set some parameters around divorce and remarriage. Moses didn't want the Israelites to shop for woman like one hunts for a bargain at the stores, comparing all of the options before you purchase the best deal. When it comes to marriage, you don't shop around, trying several wives, so that you can find out which one you want the most. God said that such a thing should not take place. In so doing, God placed a high premium on marriage. It was not to be taken lightly. When you found some indecency, you weren't commanded to divorce. But this is almost the sense you get from the Pharisees' second question, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce?" (Matt. 19:7).

That being said, we can now turn back to Matthew 19, where Jesus will give us a proper perspective on why Moses wrote these words. Look at verses 8 and 9.

[Jesus] said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matt. 19:8-9)

With these words, Jesus corrects these Pharisees. Moses didn't command divorce, as the Pharisees implied. But, he permitted it. He let it take place. I want to emphasize here, that there's a difference between commanding and allowing. It is a very big difference. Moses does not command divorce; he permitted it. So, if divorce wasn't God's plan for marriage (as Jesus demonstrated in verses 4-6), why did Moses permit divorce? Jesus said, "Because of your hardness of heart." This is a crucial phrase in understanding divorce. **Divorces always happen because of hardness of heart**. Divorces always happens because of sin. You show me a divorce and I'll show you sin. The two go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other. It's like rain and water. It's like sun and heat. It's like kids and crying. When you have a divorce, you will have sin.

When Jesus uses the phrase, "hardness of heart," He is describing a heart that has been so callused by sin that it is no longer sensitive to sin. Those with hard hearts will not acknowledge their sin, will not confess their sin, and will not repent of their sin. Rather, they will insist upon their own way, will be unloving, will be unkind, and will be selfish. When you have divorce, one (and often both) of the parties involved will have a hard heart. The great Old Testament example that comes to mind is the story of Pharaoh. He had a hard heart. And though he saw the incredible workings of God with his own eyes, he didn't humble himself and confess his sin. He didn't turn to the Word of the LORD. Rather, he persisted in his own stubbornness and he refused to let the Israelites go.

There are many Pharaoh's in marriages. Though they counsel with others regarding their marriage difficulties, though they their sin is clearly exposed, though they are told the remedy to their difficulties, though they are told that forgiven people forgive people, they will still persist in their own stubbornness and refuse to repent. Why? Because they have a hard heart with respect to their spouse. They have no love for their spouse. They are only interested in themselves and what makes them happy. They aren't willing to bend and help and admit the obvious. When hearts are hard, divorces will happen. Jesus said that Moses permitted divorces in such cases. When they took place, Moses made sure that certificates were given, so that the society would know the status of the divorced woman. Moses made sure that there was no returning to the former husband.

In America, there are many hard hearts. We have seen the results. In America today, there are more than 20 million people who are divorced. That's approaching 10% of our entire adult population. You gather 100 adults in a room, and chances are that 10 of them have been through a divorce. I would call this an epidemic in America. In the end, it shows how sinful we are as a society. There are many men and women in our culture today who simply cannot live together, because of their selfish ways.

For those of you who are married, there are great lessons for us to learn here. If you are having conflicts in your marriage, it is most certainly because one (or both) of you have a hard heart. In some way or another, one of you (or most likely both) are being sinful. You are demanding your own way. Or, you are not forgiving. Rather than being focused upon pleasing your spouse, you are focused upon pleasing yourself. This is the point, where you need to realize the necessity of the cross of Christ in your marriage. Face it now, in your marriages: you will sin against your spouse. When it happens, you ought to repent of your sin quickly. You ought to look to the cross, where forgiveness is found. You ought to seek forgiveness. Your spouse will sin against you. When it happens, you ought to freely forgive, as Christ has freely forgiven you. And when you don't forgive, it's because you have a hard heart. And when you have a hard heart, you start on the way to divorce, which Jesus said isn't right.

Look at the last phrase in verse 8, Jesus said, "from the beginning it has not been this way." We've already seen (last week) in Genesis 1 and 2 that marriage didn't begin this way. When you continue in your Bible to Exodus, you see that it wasn't this way. When God gave the 10

commandments, the 7th commandment was, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). You should be faithful to your spouse in your marriage. If you go down to the 10th commandment, the one about coveting, you find Moses addressing the same thing, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17). You shouldn't even think about unfaithfulness. If you continue on to Leviticus, you'll find instructions in chapter 20 that attach the death penalty for those who are unfaithful in their marriage (Lev. 20:10-16).

From the beginning of creation, it has been one man with one woman forming a strong union for life. From the establishment of the law, it has been the same. It's remarkable that as a society, we know this. Think about the standard marriage vows that are said across this land. The groom stands in front of a crowd of people in a church building (or in front of a judge) and says, "I take you as my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." The bride then repeats the same thing, "I take you as my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." And yet, what takes place? Two million people every year break their solemn vows that they made with each other. Though they promised "for better or for worse," when it gets worse, they bail. Though they promised, "for richer or for poorer," when the financial crisis comes, they want out. Though they promised, "in sickness and in health," when the spouse needs great medical attention, it can strain the marriage and lead to divorce. Though they promised, "to love and to cherish," they hate and despise. Though they promised, "till death do us part," they separate that union that God put together. What's the bottom line? **We live in a land full of promise breakers.** In a room of 100 adults, 10 of them cannot keep the single, most solemn pledge that they make. And this has massive ramifications on our families and on our society.

We live among a people with heard hearts, just as Moses did. And he gave instructions regarding divorce. He gave these instructions not because it was commanded, not because it was good, not because God thinks that a divorce is the best option, but because divorce is inevitable with those who have hard hearts.

2. What did Jesus say about divorce? (verse 9)

In verse 9, Jesus gives us a perspective that we ought to have when it comes to divorce, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." What Jesus says makes perfect sense. Adultery is the act of being unfaithful to your marriage partner. When you divorce and marry another, you have been unfaithful to your marriage partner. This is true even though everything was done legally, according to the law of the land. It is true even if you never met your next married partner until you were divorced. The truth remains, you were unfaithful to your wedding vows and unfaithful to your spouse. The day you marry another is the day that you become an adulterer. Other gospel writers record Jesus saying the same thing:

- Mark 10:11-12, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."
- Luke 16:18, "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."

But, in Matthew, Jesus does give an exception to His statement. He says, "except for immorality." The King James reads, "except for fornication," which might appear to limit the scope of this word to sexual activity before marriage, which some seek to do. But, the Greek word that is used here is very general. It describes all forms of improper sexual activity. Now, there have been pages and pages written about these three words. In fact, so much has been written about them, that these words are known as "The Exception Clause." This past month, I have poured over many of those pages, in attempts to understand what they mean. I believe that Jesus here permits divorce in the case of sexual immorality. That's what the text says. I tried hard this past month as I studied and prayed over this passage to understand these words to say that there is absolutely no Biblical grounds for divorce. Many attempt to make them say that. It would make my life as a pastor much easier in many ways. I could simply distance myself from any divorced people. Many churches do this in the name of purity. But, I just couldn't see this taught in the Bible.

I believe that there is a Biblical grounds given for divorce. There is a reason given in the Scriptures that would allow you to divorce your spouse. Jesus says it quite clearly, "whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." I can't get past the exception clause to believe that there are no grounds ever for divorce. After all, this is the same reason that God gave to Israel for divorcing her. In Jeremiah 3:8, God said "I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce." And God does nothing sinful.

But, listen very carefully. Although Jesus allows for divorce in this situation, it's not a command. He allows it. He permits it. He says it's not a sin. The old Rabbis would have tried to make this a command. Many today would love to make it a command. But it isn't. So, if there comes a day in which your spouse is unfaithful to your marriage and engaged in wrongful sexual activity, you are permitted to divorce your spouse. And that is not sinful. But, you aren't commanded to divorce. In fact, in many ways, the overall weight of the Bible would lead us in the opposite direction. When you read of God's patient, long-suffering lovingkindness, and when you realize that we are to seek to be like God, then you ought to do the same thing in marriage.

Think about the book of Hosea. God commanded Hosea to go and take a wife of harlotry (Hosea 1:2). Though she was unfaithful to the marriage, Hosea was called to be faithful to her and to love her and cherish her and bring her back (Hosea 3:1). All of this was to picture God's love for Israel. When God first called Hosea, he said, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry, and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD" (Hos. 1:2). When God called Hosea to take her in again, he said, "Go, again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods" (Hosea 3:1). As Hosea loved his adulterous wife, it pictured God's love for unfaithful, and adulterous, Israel.

And when a husband loves and forgives an adulterous wife, it is a picture of Christ's love for the church. As I mentioned briefly last week, one of the purposes of marriage is that we would picture Christ's love for the church. Weren't we unfaithful when God called us? Didn't God take

us, as wretched sinners and cleanse us through the blood of Christ? Weren't we off doing our own thing when God loved us? Receiving a repentant spouse, who had been unfaithful, back into your marriage is a great picture of the church, which your marriage is meant to be. Even if he or she brings a sexually transmitted disease back into your marriage, even if your spouse gives you herpes or venereal warts, your commitment to love your spouse is what you are called to do.

So, I don't believe that the exception clause here in Matthew gives you a command to divorce your spouse in the event that they are unfaithful to you. And for this reason, as a pastor, I will always counsel couples toward reconciliation. I believe that a marriage is capable of surviving even the greatest of sins. Reconciliation will be the theme of my counseling, always, always, always, ... until there is absolutely no hope of reconciliation.

I will counsel like Paul does in 1 Corinthians 7. That chapter is filled with practical advice and counsel, regarding marriage, divorce, and singleness. In fact, I believe that this passage is the divine commentary of Jesus' words in Matthew 19. There are several times in this chapter when Paul says, 'I say, not the Lord' -- verse 10, 12, 25. By saying this, he isn't saying that he's not inspired at this point. Rather, he is saying that he doesn't have explicit words from the lips of Jesus on these matters. Instead, he gives us more revelation, as he interprets the words of Jesus for us. Let's look together at 1 Cor. 7:10 and following, ...

"But to the married, I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away." (1 Cor. 7:10-11)

In other words, Paul counsels those who are married to stay married. He says, "Don't leave." He says, "I don't care how bad the problems are, don't leave." And if you think that the problems are so bad that you must leave, well then, don't get married to anyone else. Remain single. Or, as is preferred, be reconciled to your husband." This will always be the counsel from my lips. "God hates divorce," and I will strongly counsel against it. Reconciliation ought to be the focus of all marriage counseling. Jesus' words should ring in the ears of every marriage counselor: "What God has joined together, let no man separate."

But yet, there may very well reach a point when a spouse's sexual immorality continues, and there is no repentance. In this case, as Jesus said, divorce is permitted. But it should only be a last resort. I remember hearing one divorced man recall his marriage. He said, "I can share many things, but I can't share my wife." And in such a situation, Jesus permitted divorce. Let me say at this point that if a couple is considering divorce, and both parties claim to be Christians, something is dreadfully wrong. Divorce should never take place in the church. Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Before a divorce takes place within the church, the process that Jesus gave in Matthew 18 ought to be followed if both parties are claiming to be in Christ. The sinning spouse should be confronted with his or her sin. At first the confrontation should be private. Then by a few. And then by the church. If there is genuine repentance anywhere along the way, the marriage should work towards reconciliation and not divorce. But, with no repentance, however, the one involved in sexual immorality ought to be treated as an unbeliever who is walking away from his or her marriage, committing adultery in the process.

Paul deals with this situation in 1 Corinthians 7:12-15. Again, this is divine commentary on the words of Jesus. Look at what Paul says,

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

Paul gives here another reason for which divorce is permissible: when an unbeliever wants out. Rather than fighting it and refusing, Paul says, "Let it go." You are called to peace in your marriage (verse 15). This does not include fighting, arguing, and resisting. It is peace. If your spouse cannot tolerate your Christian beliefs anymore, just let him or her go.

So, when is divorce allowed? In the case of sexual immorality and in the case of an unbeliever wishing to leave. Those are the only two reasons that anyone can be divorced biblically. There are multitudes of other reasons for which people claim as grounds for the divorce, all of which are unbiblical. Communicational problems are not biblical grounds to divorce. Incompatibility problems aren't biblical grounds for divorce. Physical abuse isn't found as a biblical justification for divorce. (In such cases, if your safety is involved, it might be reason to get the police involved to protect you. It may also require separation for a time. But it doesn't give reason to divorce.) Verbal abuse has no biblical warrant to seek a divorce. Neither does deception or lying or in-laws or arguments or bad breath or hygiene habits or weight gain or sterility or finances or anything else. The Bible only gives two reasons to divorce a spouse: sexual immorality and desertion.

I know that things in marriage can become difficult. Even positive things going into a marriage can turn to be a negative things. Here's what I mean:

She married him because he was such a "strong, forceful man."
Then divorced him because he was too "dominating."

He married her because she was so "fragile and petit."
Then divorced her because she was too "weak and helpless."

She married him because he knew how "to be a good provider."
Then divorced him because "all he thought about was work."

He married her because "she reminded him of his mother."
Then divorced her because "she was more like a mother than a wife."

She married him because he was "happy and smiled a lot."
Then divorced him because he was "complacent and joked too much."

He married her because she was "steady and sensible."
Then divorced her because she too "boring and dull."

She married him because he was "the life of the party."
Then divorced him because "he wanted to socialize all the time."

He married her because she "knew the value of a dollar."
Then divorced her because she "insisted on following a budget."

She married him because he "took care of his body."
Then divorced him because he "spent too much time at the gym."

He married her because she was such a "good conversationalist."
Then divorced her because she was too "chatty."

She married him because he "loved kids."
Then divorced him because "he wanted too big of a family."

He married her because she was the "girl of his dreams."
Then divorced her because she was a "nightmare." [\[1\]](#)

None of these things are valid reasons for divorce. The Bible only gives two reasons to divorce a spouse: sexual immorality and desertion. That's what Jesus (and Paul) said about divorce.

3. What about after a divorce?

With this question, the rubber meets the road. Someone says, "Hey, I'm divorced! What should I do?"

1. You need to deal with your past divorce. The situations surrounding divorces are as numerous as the number of divorces there are. Perhaps you weren't a Christian when you divorced. Perhaps you received unbiblical counsel. Perhaps you divorced on grounds that were not biblical. Perhaps you went against all counsel in pursuit of your lusts, sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth (Heb. 10:26). In whatever situation your divorce occurred, you need to confess your sin. It is rare that someone goes through a divorce without sinning. Even if your spouse was unfaithful or deserted you, my guess is that you expressed sinful attitudes and words as well, while your flesh was being ripped away from you. Confess it, and know that the Lord forgives all who come to him in genuine repentance. It is at the cross where sinners are made whole. It is at the cross where sinners are justified. It is at the cross where we find our hope.

2. If there is any possibility of remarriage, then remain single and pursue reconciliation. You should pray, long for, and work towards reconciliation. This is what Paul said in verse 11, "if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband." That is the clear plan for you. I know that this process may be long and hard. It may take years. It may even include help from others. Perhaps you might have to contact a former church member who wrongly counseled you. Perhaps you might need the help of mutual friends, who can speak to your former spouse. But, what a glorious thing it is when divorced people confess their sin and repent and come back together again as a man and a woman. What a glorious thing it will be when Israel's hardness is lifted (Rom. 11:25), so that they look upon Him whom they have pierced; and mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son (Zech. 12:10), and embrace their Savior.

But, there may reach a time in which reconciliation is impossible. I'm talking about when one of the parties gets married. In this instance, according to Deuteronomy 24, you shouldn't be married again to your former spouse. And it is only when reconciliation is an impossibility, are you free to consider remarriage.

3. If you are free to remarry, then remain single, if at all possible. Don't remarry. But, remain single for the glory of God. This is the best for you. There are unbelievable benefits and advantages to remaining single. Last week I preached on marriage. This week was divorce. Next week the topic will be singleness because Jesus addresses it in Matthew 19:10-12. The Lord gifts people to live in a single state. But, there are some who can't remain single. Look at what Paul says,

But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn. (1 Cor. 7:8-9)

When Paul speaks about the "unmarried" here, I think that he is talking about all of those who are not married. He's addressing those who have never been married and he's talking about those who have been married before (and divorced). Some will object to the last use of the word, but this is how the word, "unmarried" is used in verse 11 (i.e. of divorced people). So, if you aren't married and you are burning, then get married. This flows logically from what Paul said in verse 2, "Because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." Keep in mind that Paul is writing these things to Corinth, one of the most sexually perverse societies of the ancient world. You simply need to read the list of what these people used to be like in chapter 6, verse 9. They were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. But, God changed them. God washed them,

sanctified, and justified them "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." So, I'm sure these people were coming from messed up marriages. Paul said, "Because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). If you're burning, get married.

I know that some will disagree with me at this point, believing that remarriage is always wrong. Some of these men are great theologians whom I respect. Yet, I can't quite match their position with 1 Cor. 7:26-28, which clearly teaches that marriage is permissible after divorce. Paul writes, ...

I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you should marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. (1 Cor. 7:26-28)

The principle is found in verse 26. It is best to stay in the condition in which you are in. Are you single? Stay single. Are you married? Stay married. Paul works this principle out in verse 27, "Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released." In other words, if you are married, don't seek a divorce. "Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife." In other words, are you divorced, don't seek a marriage. And in verse 28, he speaks of remarriage, "But if you should marry, you have not sinned." He isn't talking about one who has never been married, for he continues on to speak about the virgins in the second half of the verse, "if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned." So, obviously, the first half of the verse wasn't talking about those who have never been married. It must be talking about those who are "released from a wife" (i.e. divorced). I don't see any other way to take these verses, but to describe the remarriage of a divorced person.

4. If you remarry, then marry a Christian. This is what Paul says in 1 Cor. 7:39, "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." In other words, if you remarry, you should marry a fellow believe in Jesus Christ.

My prayer for Rock Valley Bible Church is that there would never be a divorce among us. So, if there are those in this church that you know of that are having marriage difficulties, pray for them, help them counsel them, love them and urge them to come back together again. When and if this takes place, may God receive glory as sinners, who have drifted from one another come back to enjoy their marriages once again.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 8, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] This illustration was found all over the internet. I couldn't find a source for it.