

What Did Jesus Teach on Divorce?

By David J. Stewart

The unrepentant Pharisees came to Jesus in Mark 10:1-12, asking Him if it was **LAWFUL** to divorce? We read in the Bible...

Discussion about Divorce and Marriage

"¹Then Jesus left Capernaum and went southward to the region of Judea and into the area east of the Jordan River. As always there were the crowds, and as usual he taught them. ²Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?" ³"What did Moses say about divorce?" Jesus asked them. ⁴"Well, he permitted it," they replied. "He said a man merely has to write his wife an official letter of divorce and send her away." ⁵But Jesus responded, "He wrote those instructions only as a concession to your hard-hearted wickedness. ⁶But God's plan was seen from the beginning of creation, for 'He made them male and female.' ⁷This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, ⁸and the two are united into one. Since they are no longer two but one, ⁹let no one separate them, for God has joined them together." ¹⁰Later, when he was alone with his disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again. ¹¹He told them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her. ¹²And if a woman divorces her husband and remarries, she commits adultery." Mark 10:1-12

Carefully notice that Jesus DIDN'T answer, "yes" to their question. Clearly, divorce is not lawful. Jesus directed them to the law of Moses. The Pharisees stated that Moses allowed divorce. Jesus **COUNTERS** their excuse by telling them that Moses reluctantly permitted divorce, only allowing it because of the wicked **HARDNESS** of their hearts. It couldn't be any clearer that Jesus was completely against divorce. So in answer to the Pharisee's question, of whether divorce is "lawful" or not, we have already made 3 observations:

1. Jesus DIDN'T permit divorce.
2. Moses DIDN'T want to permit divorce either, but the people gave him no choice.
3. Divorce only happens because of people's rebellion against God.

How ridiculous that so many people today, even professed Christians, are misquoting the Bible in a selfish attempt to justify the sin of divorce. It cannot be accomplished. Try as they may, sin is still sin, and divorce will always be a horrible sin just like abortion, homosexuality, and adultery.

Jesus solidified his stand against divorce in Mark 10:7-9...

⁷"This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, ⁸and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, ⁹let no one separate them, for God has joined them together."

Did you read that? Jesus said that a husband and wife become **ONE FLESH** in the eyes of God! Jesus further stated that **NO MAN** had better dare tamper with someone else's marriage... *What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* Woe unto the fools who help break up marriages—by recommending divorce, mis-counseling the wife, and contributing to the break-up of a family. Woe unto the scum-of-the-earth lawyers, and the ruthless judges, and the vile government handout programs that encourage, nurture, and cause divorce. Should it be

any wonder that America has the highest divorce rate in the world? Should it be any wonder that American women file for divorce at least TWICE the rate of men? Woe unto the United States of America! We are living in a cesspool society of iniquity, where rebel feminists lurk around every corner, even in our churches, just waiting for their chance to destroy another marriage. Jesus condemned divorce, and said it only occurs when someone is hardhearted enough to QUIT their marriage, be unwilling to forgive and break their wedding vows.

Tragically, divorce is a sin that perpetuates for a lifetime, i.e., causes lasting consequences. Jesus taught that a man leaves his father and mother for the purpose of CLEAVING to his wife. The word "cleave" is the Greek *proskollao*, and literally means, "to glue upon, glue to." In other words, a marriage is bonded together like superglue. Whether you want to accept it or not, in God's eyes every married couple is GLUED together as one. Looking at the sin of divorce from this perspective, it is clearer to understand why God hates divorce...

"For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the LORD Almighty. "So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife."—Malachi 2:16

"Putting away" is a Biblical term often used for divorce, such as in Mark 10:11 and Luke 16:18... *"Whoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery: and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery."* Divorce is a sin that God HATES!!! That's what Malachi 2:16 states, and just a few Scriptures later in Malachi 3:6 we read that God's NEVER changes... *"I am the LORD, I change not..."*

It must be noted that in Mark 10:1-12, Jesus NEVER once mentioned the so-called "exception" to divorce—fornication, which many people allege Mathew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 allows. Not so! If this were the case, then surely Jesus would have addressed the issue in Mark 10:1-12, and the Pharisees would have brought it up, but they didn't. Jesus NEVER allowed any exception to the sin of divorce, which is clearly evidenced by His statement in Mark 10:9, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man separate."* Marriage is not an agreement, it is a *lifetime commitment* sealed by a sacred wedding VOW... "For better; for worse; 'til death do us part."

For anyone to teach that Jesus permits divorce in the case of fornication is to say that Jesus also approves of breaking lifetime commitments and sacred wedding vows made. This is not the Lord of the Bible. Jesus is not a hypocrite like those filing for divorce today—who think they are more righteous than their spouse and have a right to condemn their spouse in court. James 2:10 testifies against every person who has ever filed for divorce... *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* Divorce is a sin rooted in self-righteousness. There were no disclaimers in your wedding vows. You made a promise on your wedding day, plain and simple. There was nothing in your wedding vows stating that you didn't have to honor your vows if your spouse didn't. Marriage is a lifetime commitment, and Jesus Christ would NEVER give anyone permission to renege on their wedding vows.

Furthermore, Jesus taught forgiveness—not just 7 times if our brother asks for forgiveness; but **7 times 70!!!** That's 490 times! (i.e., infinite forgiveness). This is what Matthew 18:22 teaches. How much more should we forgive our own spouse? Yet, many people today refuse to forgive their spouse even once, and hypocritically claim that they have a right to divorce for the cause of "fornication." Did not Jesus teach forgiveness for those who seek it? Yes, He certain did! To say that one has a God-given right to divorce because of adultery is to ignore the mercy and

forgiveness of God.

So What Did Jesus Mean Concerning the Sin of Fornication?

Jesus taught that it's a sin for a man to divorce his wife and marry another. This is adultery. The same holds true for a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man. It is evil. Divorce is a sin. The exception to the rule is when a man's wife abandons him to run off with another. In such a case of fornication on the part of the departing spouse, the husband is placed into a no-win-situation. What is a husband supposed to do if his wife abandons him? What is a wife supposed to do if her husband runs off with another?

The Christian who's spouse has abandoned them for someone else (and is remarried) has two options:

1. Remain celibate
2. Remarry

This is the only context in which Jesus permits divorce and remarriage, i.e., if one's spouse mercilessly abandons and runs off in fornication with someone else. The Bible teaches that it is a treacherous thing to abandon one's spouse...

"Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her lover, So you have dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," declares the LORD. —**Jeremiah 3:20**

Jesus WASN'T teaching that it's ok for a wife to divorce her husband because he sins. That's absurd!

A woman recently told me that she divorced her husband because he looked at porno and went with a prostitute. I seem to recall a story in the Bible about an adulterous woman, caught in the very act of adultery, and an angry mob wanted to stone her to death. A lot of self-righteous wives today would fit in well with that angry mob. I'm not condoning any sin, I'm just saying that EVERYONE sins and what gives anyone the right to file for divorce? According to James 2:10 we are all very horrible sinners... *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* Think about that.

If Jesus permits divorce in the case of fornication, then what about murder, stealing and others sins/crimes? Does a wife have a right to divorce her husband if he unlawfully kills someone? What about a spouse who is sentenced to life in prison? Is it ok to divorce and "move on" as so many people selfishly do nowadays? No, God hates all divorce!

The Biblical term "put away" (Greek: *apoluo*) means *to send away, loose, let go*. It is QUITTING, giving up, throwing away, disowning one's spouse, as you would toss a piece of trash into the garbage. It means telling your spouse, "I don't love you anymore." Those are the cruelest words you'll ever say to someone. If you don't love your spouse now, it's only because you never did to begin with. The world's fake "love" is synthetic, shallow and conditional. God's love is unconditional.

We are not supposed to throw away our spouse and give up on them when they sin. We are not to "put away" our spouse. Jesus taught us to forgive. There is NO forgiveness in divorce—it is cruel, malicious, selfish, self-righteous, and its consequences last a lifetime. God will weigh each situation, knowing every minute detail, and no one will be able to hide behind their self-righteousness on Judgment Day. The sin of divorce is rooted in self-righteousness.

We are living in an evil and adulterous generation that persistently searches for excuses to justify their wickedness. Woe unto the pastors, pastor's wives and so-called "Christians" today who subtly encourage, nurture and promote divorce. It is sin.

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce as a concession to your hard-hearted wickedness, but it was not what God had originally intended. —Matthew 19:8

"For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the LORD Almighty. "So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife"—Malachi 2:16 Divorce is sin.