

The Brown Street Beacon

*"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,
holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)*



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What Jesus Said about Divorce

I recently read a quote that said, *"Divorce isn't really a tragedy; staying in a bad marriage is."* The truth is, both of those unfortunate situations are tragic. Certainly being in a bad marriage is tragic; however, the answer to a bad marriage is not divorce. You see, divorce itself is a tragedy, not only because of the ill effects that it has on those involved, including the children of those who get divorced, but also because it is something that God hates (Malachi 2:16), and is therefore sinful. Sin is always tragic.



There is only one thing that allows one to divorce his or her spouse and that is fornication. God has permitted a married person to put away his or her spouse when that spouse has been unfaithful. A put away person never has the right to remarry. Listen to Jesus.

Matt 19:9

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Matt 5:32

32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Luke 16:18

18 "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Every time Jesus addresses this issue, the conclusion is the same regarding the person who is put away. When the divorced person remarries, it results in adultery.

Some brethren are now teaching that the person who is divorced for a reason other than fornication can remarry if his previous spouse commits fornication after the divorce. This is the mental divorce position that apparently is growing in popularity. The problem is that the order is wrong. According

to the teaching of Jesus, the fornication must take place before the divorce because the very purpose of the divorce, in the first place, must be the fornication that has taken place. The mental divorce theory says that a person can be divorced first, and then after his spouse commits fornication, he can turn around and divorce his spouse for that fornication. Since in that scenario the person who is put away is already divorced, his only recourse is to divorce his previous spouse mentally; hence, the title “mental divorce.” So, Jesus said fornication then divorce, while the mental divorce advocates say divorce then fornication. This reminds me of the Baptist who, instead of teaching God’s plan of salvation, that is, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), teaches, “he that believes will be saved and then he is to be baptized.” In both cases the order is wrong.

One might ask the mental divorce theorist, “How can a person divorce someone who is already divorced?” The answer to this question is the foundation of the mental divorce doctrine. They believe that since the original divorce was not for fornication, God doesn’t recognize it. The put away person in their view is really not put away, at least “in the eyes of God.” This is a critical point. If it can be shown that God does recognize an unscriptural divorce, that is, a divorce for a reason other than fornication, the mental divorce theory collapses. The truth is, a divorce that takes place for a reason other than fornication is not right in the eyes of God, but it is recognized as a divorce in His sight. How do I know this? I know it first because Jesus called a putting away for a reason other than fornication a divorce in Matthew 19:9. Second, Paul tells us that a person who divorces his spouse for a reason other than fornication is unmarried. Listen to it.

1 Cor 7:10-11

10 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. 11 But even if she does depart, let her remain UNMARRIED or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife

Why is this woman who divorces her husband called unmarried? Obviously it is because she has divorced her husband (the Greek word for depart is *chorizo*, which is the same word that Jesus used in reference to divorce in Matthew 19:6). So then, even though the divorce was not pleasing to God, it was still recognized that the woman was divorced. This destroys the mental divorce theory.

Those who teach that God doesn’t recognize the divorce that takes place in the absence of fornication, almost always confuse being married to someone and being bound to someone. This is why they often use the language, “married in the eyes of God,” or “divorced in the eyes of God.” To them if a marriage or divorce is not right with God, it is not recognized by God.” However, that concept is scripturally wrong. Just because God doesn’t like something, doesn’t mean that He doesn’t recognize the reality of it. No, God isn’t happy when someone gets a divorce, but He still recognizes it as a divorce regardless of the reason for it. Now, when a man divorces his wife for a reason other than fornication, he is still bound to her by God’s law; however, he is no longer married to her. And if he marries someone else, he would not be bound to that second wife, but he would be married to her. Hence, he would be bound to one woman and married to another. This is what Paul describes to us in Romans 7:2-3. So, the point of it is this—when a man divorces his wife unscripturally, that is, for a reason other than fornication, even though God doesn’t like it, he is a divorced man and his wife is a divorced woman. Thus, neither one of them, as long as they are both living, can ever marry again without committing adultery. Do you see how this destroys the mental divorce theory? That theory hinges on the unscriptural divorce not really being a divorce, for it says that God doesn’t recognize it.

ognize it. So, when the spouse of the innocent husband or wife commits adultery sometime after the divorce, the innocent spouse can mentally put away the cheating spouse for that adultery. The theory is that this second divorce is not really a second divorce because God didn't recognize the first one. We have seen, however, that God does recognize the first divorce, so that the put away spouse cannot remarry without it being adultery. Be sure to read the quotes in the beginning of the article again.

God hates divorce. The effort to try to find another way to divorce and remarry, that is, mentally divorcing a spouse who has already divorced them, is an exercise in futility. Man may accept the theory, but God doesn't and God is the one with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13). What is the solution in all this? Stay married.

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