

LESSON 18

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

CENTRAL TRUTH: divorce is against God's principle of marriage.

MEMORY VERSE: "The man who hates and divorce his wife," says the LORD, the God of Israel, ... so be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful. ----- Malachi 2:16.

LESSON TEXT

Malachi 2:13-16; 1 Cor. 7:10-16.

Malachi 2:

13. Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.

14. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

15. Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.

16. "The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.

1 Cor. 7:

10. To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.

11. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

----- Fellowship of the Spirit -----

12. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.

13. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

14. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

16. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

INTRODUCTION

We are living in a time when marriages, including Christian marriages are either ending up in divorce or being threatened with divorce. According to **Michael J. McManus**, a survey conducted in America between **1960 and 1993** indicated that 60% of new marriages, especially among Christians fail or are threatened with failure. (McManus, 1995)

Comparing the above statistics to a **2000** research conducted in some communities in the Greater Accra Region, which indicated that about 40% of Christian marriages end up in divorce or are threatened with divorce; we can affirm that divorce is indeed a challenge confronting the church today. The question is why are some Christian marriages ending up in divorce?

The biblical injunction, "... Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate" (**Matt. 19:6, NIV**) demands that the church confronts this challenge in view of the realities on the ground because marriage as an institution must honour God (**Heb. 13:4**).

It is however necessary to note that since no two individuals are the same, there will certainly be differences when a man and a woman are joined in marriage. But these differences should not be allowed to drag the marriage into divorce since divorce is not a solution to material challenges. On the contrary divorce is becoming the option, not only in the secular world, but also in Christendom. To this end, it is necessary that as a church, we identify the factors that

contribute to divorce among Christians and find biblical solutions to them. This lesson will help us discover some biblical principles in dealing with the issue of divorce.

LESSON

God has stated categorically (**Malachi 2:15-16**) that he hates divorce. His hatred of divorce stems from the fact that, divorce destroys the beauty of marriage and nullifies God's declaration of oneness in the marital relationship (**Gen. 2:24**). **Secondly**, divorce does not help raise godly children as God demands (**Malachi 2:15**). **Thirdly**, God hates divorce because it "covers one's garment with violence" (**Malachi 2:16**). By implication, divorce breeds hatred, bitterness and confusion which steal the peace and joy God intends married couples to have. On the other hand divorce is an affront to God's integrity, having declared that he who finds a wife, finds a good thing and obtains favour with God (**Prov. 18:22**).

The affirmation of God's hatred of divorce is also seen clearly in the Mosaic laws governing divorce and re-marriage as captured in **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**. This scripture is a law to deter couples from divorcing at will, since such an action will demand the issuance of a certificate of divorce which does not permit the re-marriage of the couples involved.

The biblical concept of marriage and divorce as stated in the New Testament is built on the Old Testament concept. The key New Testament scripture on marriage and divorce referred to by Christ (**Matt. 19:3-9**), is a quotation from **Gen. 1:27, 2:24** and **Deut. 24:1-4**. Christ made reference to these scriptures in the answer to the Pharisees, who were trying to trap him by his interpretation of **Deut. 24:1-4**. In **Matt. 19:3-9**, Christ reiterated what God intends marriage to be. He indicated that it must be free from parental interference as quoted, "for this reason shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife."

Secondly, it must be spiritual union where couples become one in essence as indicated by the phrase, "... and the two shall become one flesh". **Thirdly**, it must be a covenant relationship and under no circumstance must it be broken, as implied by the phrase, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate". He concluded by affirming that divorce was not approved by God but was permitted of man's stubbornness.

LIFE APPLICATION

1. What are some of the reasons that lead to divorce in Christian marriages?
2. What must a spouse who finds himself/herself in an abusive marriage do?
3. What are some of the apparent irreconcilable issues in marriage and how do we resolve them?
4. Where should a spouse facing the threat of divorce go?

----- DAILY BIBLE READING -----

Monday: Divorce forbidden. (Matt. 19:3-9).

Tuesday: The problem of divorce and re- marriage. (Matt. 5:31-32).

Wednesday: Biblical mandate for re-marriage. (Rom. 7:2-3).

Thursday: Marriage must be kept pure. (Heb. 13:4).

Friday: The challenge of divorce. (Deut. 24:1-4).

Saturday: Divorce of unbelieving spouse forbidden. (1 Cor. 7:12-15).

----- Fellowship of the Spirit -----