

Reading: **1st Corinthians 7:10-11**

INTRO. Someone has said marriage is a **3-ring** circus: The engage-ment ring, the wedding ring, & suffer-ring. Unfortunately, what was intended as a clever pun is true for millions of people because for them marriage has been a lot of suffering. Almost everything you read today about marriage & the home is depressing. A sampling of the most recent statistics on marriage & divorce in the U. S. bears this out. For example:

- Percentage of population that's married: **59%**
- Percentage of population that's divorced: **10%**
- Median duration of first marriages that end in divorce: **7.8** years for males, **7.9** years for females.
- Percentage of married folk who reach their 10th anniversary: **65%**,
- Percentage of those who reach their 25th anniversary: **33%**
- Percentage of those who reach their 35th anniversary: **20%**
- Percentage of those who reach their 50th anniversary: **5%**
- Likelihood of first marriages ending in divorce: **43%**
- When 2nd, 3rd & 4th marriages are figured in, **50%** of them will end in divorce. Dr. Phil McGraw of television fame says it's **57.7%**
- Number of people who divorce each year, since 1997: **2.5 million**

Have you ever wondered why there's been such an increase in the divorce rate in America? I'm sure the reasons are many, but three stand out: First, divorce is now considered the easy way out of a bad marriage. When a couple has problems today, as any couple will, the attitude is to just get a divorce rather than working through their problems. But, the reality is, there's nothing easy about a divorce. Secondly, divorce is on the rise today because it's socially acceptable. It used to be that when a couple divorced, people were shocked & saddened. It was seen as a terrible thing, even scandalous. But not anymore. Today, we've almost come to expect it. And thirdly, divorce has become common because people care less about what God's Word says on the subject. This has long been true among denominational groups, but now, even in the church, we don't hear much preaching against divorce.

While the Bible does make some justification for divorce, as we'll

see, still the prevailing attitudes toward divorce have dramatically changed over the last 30-40 years. Yet, **we** need to realize, & we need to help our **young people** realize that divorce is not the answer. And we need to do what we can to reaffirm what **GOD'S** will is in regard to marriage, divorce & remarriage.

As a preacher of the gospel, my desire always is to sympathize with those who've suffered through a divorce & help them; however, to be true to **GOD**, I must also tell them what He says on the matter because my highest obligation is to Him. So, with this in mind, I want to raise **10 questions** about marriage, divorce & remarriage, & then see what God's Word says about it. Since most of us are already married, & **92%** of all others ultimately will marry, we need to know what **GOD'S** will is in regard to these questions.

1st...Whom should a Christian marry? Look at **2nd Cor. 6:14-15**: **"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness. And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?"** While this passage doesn't specifically mention marriage, it definitely has implications for marriage. Here, Paul's forbidding relationships where a Christian is so connected to a non-Christian that he's going to be influenced by him in a bad way. **And where else do you have that likelihood more than in marriage?** So, the only sure way to interpret this passage is that Christians should marry only Christians! After all, in marriage, you commit all of yourself to the other person: your body, your money, your future, your happiness! How then can a child of God commit himself entirely to someone who won't even confess Jesus as Lord? How can a couple build a quality marriage if they're divided on the most critical issue in life - serving Jesus?

2nd...How long is a marriage binding? Look at **Romans 7:2**: **"For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband."** That's plain, isn't it? When we marry, we don't say, **"Until divorce do us part."** We say, **"Until death do us part."** That's a promise we make, not only to our spouse, but also to God. And He expects us to keep our promises. **After all, if we're not willing to keep that promise, why would we feel**

compelled to keep other promises? From the beginning, God decreed that those who marry, should marry for life!

3rd...What if the husband or wife dies? Romans 7:2-3, "For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man."

Paul says the death of a husband releases his wife from the law that bound her to him. And the same is true for a husband if his wife dies. In either case, the marriage is dissolved, & the other person can re-marry, if they so desire. It's interesting what Paul says to young women whose husband dies, in 1st Tim. 5:14: "I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully." It's better for a young widow to marry, have a family & fulfill her greatest calling than to be cared for by the church... which was often the case for older widows.

4th...What is the result if someone remarries while their first partner is alive? Look again at Romans 7:3: "So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man." Paul says for one to remarry while their first partner is alive is to be "called" an adulterer/adulteress, i.e. that's what GOD calls them. [If we lie, God calls us a liar; if we steal, God calls us a thief. If we commit adultery, God calls us an adulterer] Obviously, this is not the law most people live by today, & many would be shocked to know the Bible says this. But this is the law of God, & it's the law you & I must live by. You can get a divorce "legally" for any reason, but being "legal" isn't the same as being "scriptural". We want to be sure we're "scriptural"...& Paul says to remarry when your first partner is still alive, is to be called an adulteress or adulterer.

5th...Is there any exception to this rule? Yes. Look at Matt. 19:9, where Jesus said, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, & marries another, commits adultery; & whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

A similar statement is found in **Matt. 5:32**, but while these are the only times Jesus gave the exception, it's as binding as if He'd said it a hundred times! And notice Jesus has both divorce & remarriage in mind...the exception applies to the entire situation...**"whoever divorces his wife... and marries another..."** But it should be understood that this permission to remarry is only for the one who was sinned against, not the one who committed the adultery. Jesus permits divorce on this one ground...it's the only sure 'way out' He's given. ~ ALSO, it should be said that even when adultery occurs, it doesn't mean the innocent partner has to divorce. If the guilty one is repentant, & shows he wants to preserve the marriage, then by God's grace, forgiveness can be given, & they can begin to rebuild their marriage. That's happened many times! But Jesus knew there'd be situations where a husband or wife would not be faithful, & so in that case, He made an exception where the innocent party could divorce & remarry without sin.

6th...Did Moses allow divorce? Go back to **Matt. 19:7-8**: **"They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, & to put her away?' He said to them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."** The law of Moses clearly provided for divorce (**Deut. 24:1-4**), but only because the people were so cruel & heartless. Men divorced their wives on a whim...if he didn't like her cooking! The situation was out of control! So, Moses allowed it, partly to control the situation, & partly to protect the women. But, as Jesus said, from the beginning God never allowed for divorce; His plan was that marriage should last. And so, to appeal to the law of Moses to justify divorce is to rely on a dead law... a law that was nailed to the cross of Christ!

7th...What should you do if you're married to someone who decides marriage isn't for them? Paul deals with this in **1st Cor. 7**, where, for example, a wife decides marriage just isn't her thing & she wants out! He says **vs. 10-11**: **"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. 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."** So, Paul says to the wife in this case, "You can't just say, 'Marriage isn't what I thought, I want out...' & leave!" But, what if the husband forces her out? What if, in this case, he wants out & he makes life so unbearable for her that she's forced to leave? What if he begins to

hinder her efforts to serve God? What's she to do? Well, if she's forced to leave or separate ~ & God could foresee situations where that would happen ~ He said she's not to remarry. She must either remain single, or be reconciled to her husband. After all, she's still bound to him...he's still her husband.. & if things can be worked out they should reconcile.

8th...What about a 'mixed marriage' where a Christian is married to an unbeliever? Quite often this happened, where one became a Christian & the other didn't. And the Christian might look for a way out of the marriage, convinced that's the only way to honor God. So, Paul says in **1st Cor. 7:12-14**, **"But to the rest** (you who're married to non-Christians) **I, not the Lord, say** (i.e. Jesus didn't address this), **If any brother has a wife who does not believe, & she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him."** So, Paul says being married to a non-Christian is no reason to divorce them or leave them...if they're willing to live with you. If anything, you should work even harder to live right, & do what you can to help your mate become a Christian. If they're going to be won, it'll be by your example!

9th...What if the non-believing spouse leaves? That's what Paul answers in **vs. 15**, **"But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace."** Some call this the **"Pauline privilege"** & suggest Paul's giving another reason for divorce, besides fornication. But that's not what he's talking about. Paul's talking about a situation where a non-Christian wants out of the marriage because of the faith of the Christian. So, he says, **"I'm leaving! I don't like the fact that you're a Christian, so I'm getting out. And if you don't want me to leave you, then you leave the Lord."** Paul says, **"When that's his attitude, let him leave! You're not under bondage in such cases. Marriage isn't a master/slave relationship! Your bondage isn't to your spouse; it's to the Lord! He's your Master."** You see, no husband or wife can ever put you under such bondage that you have to forsake God! So, if they choose to leave because of your faith, let them depart. Your highest obligation is to the Lord.

10th...What about marrying a divorced person who had no scriptural grounds for divorce? Look at **Matt. 5:32**. Jesus said, **"But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; & whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."** Be very careful about marrying a divorcee! Because Jesus says if he/she was divorced for **"any"** reason - other than the fact that their spouse was guilty of fornication - & you marry them, then you enter an unholy relationship! It doesn't matter how nice they are, how sad & lonely they are, how badly their children need a father or mother, Jesus says **"whoever"** marries such a person commits adultery!

The Bible says in **Mal. 2:16** that God **"hates divorce"**, but He doesn't hate divorced people... & neither do I. But, as your preacher, it's my responsibility to teach you the truth about it. If you don't want a divorce, then don't have one! Over a quarter of century ago, Bro. **Paul Rogers**, now deceased, gave 10 things to do to prevent divorce. He said, **"If you do not want a divorce..."**

- 1) **Put your mate first** ~ it's the greatest security you can give your children, letting them see that you love each other
- 2) **Learn to express your love to your mate** ~ love is never out of date or out of style.
- 3) **Learn to live within your means** ~ it's a fine thing to do with, but it's even better to do without successfully!
- 4) **Learn to build, not blast, the self-esteem of your partner** ~ Nothing is so damaging as the discovery that the one person who ought to know & love us best is the very person who puts us down!
- 5) **Then don't marry a mate with the idea of reforming him or her** ~ very few people are changed by the simple act of walking down a marriage aisle.
- 6) **Learn to compromise with each other** ~ remember the sweetest words to fall from human lips are "I'm sorry, please forgive me."
- 7) **Seek & find common goals & directions** ~ instead of doing "your own thing" look for projects which can be pursued together.
- 8) **Then reject interference from in-laws & relatives** ~ You've left your parents & must "cleave to your wife".

- 9) *Learn to communicate that which is in your heart ~ The surest road I know leading to the divorce court is the one which passes through the hall of silence.*
- 10) *Then determine today that your marriage is a gift from God, set apart by God, & will result in being with God.*

Obviously, this last point is most important. The greatest thing any of us can do for our marriage is be a Christian. It's what you'd expect a preacher to say, but it's true! When a husband & wife are both dedicated to living for God, then they're going to do what they can to make their marriage great.

Today, if you're not a Christian... or you're not the faithful Christian you need to be... we invite you to come to Christ, as we stand & sing!