

# Divorce and the Christian Heart

## Sunday, June 23, 2019

### Introduction

While divorce is not a pleasant topic, God's wisdom on the subject is.

The learning outcome of this lesson is not shame, blame or guilt, but rather how to thrive, which is what Zoe means.

As we've learned over the last few weeks, thriving hinges on how much we embrace responsibility.

Last week we learned that responsibility means "able to respond."

However, for a believer, responsibility is to respond with God's ability: Your choices, His power.

### Jesus on Divorce

Matthew 19: 3-11  
Matthew 5:27-28

### Solomon on the Wisdom of Marital Fidelity

Proverbs 5:18-20

### Reflecting on Jesus' Words about Divorce

When Jesus responded to the question about divorce, He first had to disentangle God's law from human law, God's ethics from human ethics and God's thoughts from human thoughts.

However, what's difficult about interpreting His statements is that He entertains two different realities at the same time:

- 1) Jesus' account of marriage rules out divorce as something that God originally intended from the beginning.
- 2) Provision for divorce exists because of the limitations of the human heart.

Even though God expects us to live up to His standard and gives us the grace to do it, the outcome of our lives hinges on the status of the human heart (**Proverbs 4:23**)

The way we view the morality of a divorce also depends on the status or motives of the human heart.

God is left to work with what our hearts allow (**I Sam 8:19-22; Rom 1:24-30; Mark 11:22-25**)

Because marriage involves two hearts, the human heart complications are exponentially multiplied when entering into a marriage covenant.

Because of these complications, Jesus' response is nuanced.

Nuanced = characterized by subtle shades of meaning or expression

Subtle =

- 1) so delicate or precise as to be difficult to analyze or describe
- 2) delicately complex and understated
- 3) making use of clever and indirect methods to achieve something

God, in his wisdom, is strategically moving us toward his plan, exploiting loopholes and other opportunities to make us more like Christ while honoring the heart's boundaries.

Jesus wants to restore every troubled marriage, but because of the limitations of the human heart, He will take people only where their hearts allow.

He will always work with what your heart allows in the moment; when and if your heart becomes open for more, He will do more.

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### The Practical Role of Divorce

The purpose of a formal divorce process is to minimize and place boundaries on the material consequences of broken relationships.

### Divorce and Heart Health

However, a divorce is not a substitute for heart health, nor does it guarantee heart healing.

No legal, physical or financial separation can clean spiritually clogged arteries.

Even after the logistics of separation have been completed, the burden of a hardened heart may still remain.

Hardness of heart is "the human incapability of receiving the maximum of the divine intent" (Jack Hayford, *Biblical Perspectives on Divorce and Remarriage*)

Sometimes hardness of heart is "not because of stubbornness. . .but because of the crippledness of [human] emotions" (Jack Hayford, *Biblical Perspectives on Divorce and Remarriage*)

Divorce is not good and should be proactively and aggressively resisted, but it does not mark the end of God's goodness, grace, mercy, kindness, compassion, redemption and restoration in your life.

However, the road to recovery from divorce hinges on dealing with the larger, deeper and often hidden causes of the relationship split.

In the end, the logistical reality of divorce is less the issue than the matters of the heart that lead up to it.

Divorce is a symptom of a larger problem (i.e. hardened hearts). It is not an unpardonable sin.

### Practical Wisdom for Divorce Healing and Prevention

In many ways, what's needed to prevent divorce and what's needed to heal from divorce are the same.

Both situations require a commitment to foundational things:

1. Be married to the heart of God (Jack Hayford, *Sex and the Single Soul*, p.36)
2. Be married to the local church (Jack Hayford, *Sex and the Single Soul*, p.36) (Matthew 18:15-17).
3. Create strong friendships and identify mentors (Proverbs 18:24).
4. Be committed to personal growth and development.
5. Participate in on-going educational programming (therapy, classes, books, etc.).
6. Make adjustments proactively.
7. Create a basic maintenance program for key relationships.
8. Avoid isolation.

### Recommend Resources

- *Single, Married, Separated and Life after Divorce* [Book] (Myles Munroe)
- *Biblical Perspectives on Divorce and Remarriage* [CD Album] (Jack Hayford)