

Gospel of Matthew 18:19~35

What About *D-i-v-o-r-c-e*?!



Today we are graced with the very words of Jesus on this topic. Per usual, for a Messiah that says that “*my yoke is easy and my burden light*”, He certainly does not go easy on us! Jesus does not accommodate our failings in this area! His teachings on the topic are as blunt and as unaccommodating as any of His most difficult teachings. But the question should be – is He for us or against us? If He is going to make divorce so hard, *why* would He do that?! Is it that He want us to be miserable, trapped in a loveless marriage that isn’t going anywhere but down?! Is that His purpose? Is His purpose *ever* to make us miserable?



We just finished a difficult teaching last week on forgiveness where a servant of the king is then caught being unmercifully cruel to someone else! As a result of his appalling behavior, the man in the story is thrown into prison! Jesus says that God will treat us with the same sort of hard justice if we who have been shown such great mercy by God turn around and show little or no mercy to others!

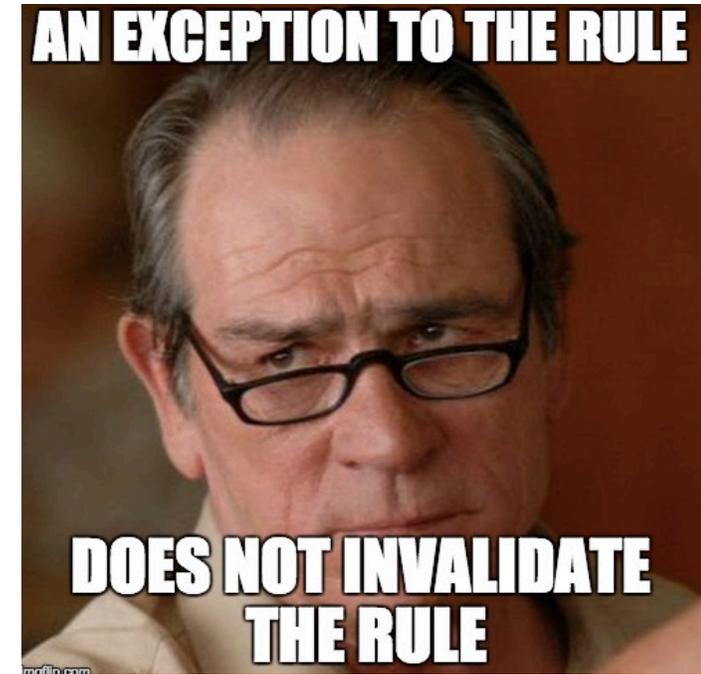


Now He follows that up with another hard saying, telling us we must remain in our marriages. I can't think of anything worse than being in a bad marriage, especially if there seems to be no hope of it getting better! But Jesus offers no consolation or counseling here, no tips on healing a marriage or creating a better one. He just gives a directive.

Jesus also includes an exception to the rule. There is a mitigating circumstances that Jesus mentions here – **unfaithfulness**.

The apostle Paul spoke of another circumstance in **1 Cor. 7**

- ~Physical or sexual abuse.
- ~A man or woman who is very cruel, very deceptive, very controlling and will not change
- ~Someone who is involved in pornography and will not stop.
- ~Abandonment.
- ~Some people were married, divorced, and remarried *before* their commitment to Christ
- ~Others were Christians but drifted away



What about illegitimate divorce and remarriage?

The key question is - what do we do about Christians that have divorced and remarried outside of these two reasons scripture gives – *and have done it while identifying as Christ-followers in love with the Savior?*

I don't know that there is a set way to handle this. To me it seems that this is between a person and God. I don't have any authority to change God's revealed will - in any matter - much less this one! In the area of marriage, God has set up a rather narrow window for remarriage, but as always, we must trust that He has a good reason.



I don't know how God views ***RE***-marriage for someone that was divorced because their spouse was truly abusive or insane or perverted and had been victimizing them or their children in horrible ways – ***but had not cheated on them or was willing to stay in the marriage.*** I don't have a real answer. I tend to think it is okay for such a person to divorce and even re-marry, but to be clear, that is me saying that and not the Lord. I think He would agree but I can't say for sure.



Divorce is a disappointment to God - but we knew that already. He has left only a narrow window for divorce **and remarriage** – 1) Adultery, or 2) an unbelieving spouse who is belligerent to a believing spouse's faith in Christ and who leaves the marriage.



What marriage is up against:

The **differences** between men and women – strengths and weaknesses of the sexes

The differences in formative **family** background All these factors

and more run against marriage partners getting along and enjoying true love!

The differences in values, protocol, etiquette, expectations of marriage and family life, ambitions, work ethic, ambitions, degree of acceptable selfishness, acceptable and unacceptable cleanliness, life experiences, etc...

But few listens to such advice. In romantic love we tend to lose our minds. **Separation** is legitimate. **Divorce** too is legitimate under extreme circumstances. generally not an acceptable alternative. But we in the body of Christ still can love and cherish divorced and/or remarried people, integrating them into the body of Christ / the church.



Did you notice that Jesus doesn't follow up this directive with a marriage seminar?! He doesn't have to! If we follow Him and obey His *other* teachings, our marriages will improve wildly!

What I can say is "choose wisely"!

You are stuck together with a spiritual super glue!. And you can't leave a marriage simply because "*you've lost that lovin' feelin'*", or even because you don't think you don't like them anymore! Survival, self-preservation dictates working things out every day to make a better marriage out of what we know intuitively could be a potentially bad one. Affirm, bless, forgive, and be merciful to your spouse even as God has been merciful to you!

