

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce & Remarriage – Pt. 1

Matthew 5:31–32

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MAIN IDEA: In Jesus' third illustration in the Sermon on the Mount, He continues to apply the 7th commandment against adultery, particularly concerning the issues of divorce and remarriage. In fact, in Matthew 5:31–32, Jesus explains that *without biblical grounds* divorce and remarriage violate the 7th commandment against adultery. So as Jesus' disciples, we must be fully committed to our marriage covenant. We consider several observations about this passage...

SERMON OUTLINE:

- I. The Corruption of the OT Teaching on Divorce
 - A. What the Scribes Taught (31)
 - B. What the OT Taught (Dt. 24:1-4)

The Jewish Mishnah

“The school of Shammai says: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, ‘Because he has found in her indecency in anything.’ And the school of Hillel says: [He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, ‘because he has found in her indecency in anything.’ Rabbi Akiba says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, ‘And it shall be if she find no favor in his eyes.’” [m. Gittim 9:10].

Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*

“He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatsoever (and many such causes happen among men), let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife anymore; for by this means she may be at liberty to marry another husband, although before this bill of divorce be given, she is not to be permitted so to do.” (IV.viii.23)

Deuteronomy 24:1–4

1. It's not primarily teaching biblical grounds for divorce.
2. It doesn't comment on the morality of divorce—it regulates it.
3. It acknowledges divorce would happen.
4. It primarily addresses one very specific circumstance.
5. It requires a written certificate in the case of divorce.
 - a. To authenticate the end of the marriage
 - b. To protect the woman from later false accusations of abandonment or adultery
 - c. To confirm her freedom to remarry
6. It warns the man not to make this decision quickly.
7. It opens the possibility of a legitimate reason for divorce & remarriage.

Key Lessons

1. Embrace Jesus' view on the permanence of marriage (Mt. 19:6; cf. 1 Cor. 7:39).
2. Embrace Jesus' view on the importance of marriage (Mt. 19:4-5).
3. Embrace Jesus' view on the beauty & blessing of lifelong marriage (Gen. 2:18, 23-24; Eccl. 9:9).
4. Repent & accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness & restoration if you've sinned by divorcing or remarrying without biblical grounds (Mt. 9:2, 6; 26:28).

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS:

1. Read Matthew 19:3–9. What key truths does this passage teach and why are these truths important for us as believers today? Why does Jesus quote the OT to make his argument/case for the primacy of marriage?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Throughout the years of your marriage, how have you come to better understand its beauty and blessing? Read Ecclesiastes 9:9—what is Solomon's exhortation for believers who are married? What are practical ways to ensure your marriage reflects Solomon's words? Discuss.

2. When talking about marriage and divorce, why is it crucial for us as believers to speak the truth but also be gracious? Why must we also be sure to explain that forgiveness and restoration can be found in Jesus Christ, particularly for those who have participated in an unbiblical divorce or remarriage? Discuss.