

What The Bible Says About Divorce



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The Manuscript below is from a series of messages called "HOT TALKS." This entire message series, is available for purchase at the Church of the Valley office. They are available for download from our website @ www.covsanramon.org

I want to start with a note of honesty. I am walking what I feel to be a very fine line in my heart. I know that there are a number of you who have been through a divorce. You know the pain and you know the hurt of it. A number of you that have been through a divorce have never really sensed God's forgiveness in your life yet. I want you to sense that forgiveness as we talk. I want you to sense the compassion that God has.

But I also know that there are a number of you that are close to divorce. Without seeing clearly what God has to say about it, you're going to do it. Those who have been through a divorce would be glad to stand up and say don't, because of what they've been through. But you're just that close. I want you to sense the conviction of God's word, what He has to say in a clear way that can help us to make the right choice.

I'm thinking, "How can I talk to both groups of people? How can I say, 'This is what God has to say!' without making those who've heaped guilt on themselves heap more guilt on themselves? How can I say, 'This is how forgiving God is,' without making some of you think, 'That means God will let me off the hook. I can do whatever I want.'"

I'm not smart enough to walk that line. But God's word has a way of speaking to whatever our need is. So we're going to look together at what His word has to say about divorce and let it speak to our needs. Some of you who have been through a divorce really need to know, "Was it a sin or not? Was it right? Was it wrong? I don't know." You need to know what the Bible has to say about it. You need to know, "Can I be forgiven?" Some of you are considering a divorce. You need to know, "Is this the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do? What does the Bible say about this situation?" It has a lot to say.

We're going to talk about something we've all be touched by. Divorce is a real part of our society. It's a part of the fabric of everything we do. Divorce has become the topic of conversation, the fabric of what happens. We're inundated by a culture of divorce. (my parents)

We could talk statistics, of the pain of divorce, stories. We could have a lot of testimonies. I could ramble on and on about my convictions because I have some of them. But that's not what we need or want. We need to know what does God have to say to us about this subject?

We're going to do some in-depth Bible study. That's what Wednesday night is for, to give us the opportunity to dig into the word together and see what does it have to say, how does it answer the questions we have. We're going to look at some passages in context, some historical background, a little bit of word study. I believe God's word has the ability to make a difference. It's always helped me to make the right choice. When I can find Scriptures about the thing I'm facing, it helps me, it strengthens me to make the right choice.

A Christian magazine a while back did a survey of Christian couples and asked those couples who at some time in their life had considered divorce and decided not to what helped them decide not to divorce. Nine out of ten said it was the teaching of the Bible. There was something in God's word that gave them the strength to make the right decision. One out of ten said it was the support of family and friends. We need both in order to make the right choices.

We're going to look together at four major passages on divorce. I've taken some of the questions our research team asked about what does the Bible say and we're going to answer those questions.

Lets look at KEY PASSAGE #1: Deuteronomy 24 is the passage in the Old Testament we need to look at because in the New Testament they looked back on this as sort of their authority. 24:1 *"A man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him [the world is "unclean" – he finds something indecent about her] and he writes her a certificate of divorce and gives it to her and sends her from the house... and after she leaves his house and then becomes the wife of another man and her second husband dislikes her, he writes her a certificate of divorce and gives it to her and sends her from the house or he dies then her first husband who divorced her is not allowed to marry her again."* What does this say?

Key Question 1: Is divorce ever permitted in the Bible?

Here we have in the book of Deuteronomy, the Bible talking about divorce. Divorce is permitted in Deuteronomy in the case of uncleanness. That's literally what that word means. Some indecency. What does that mean? You can guess that meant anything. We'll come back to this. I want you to see what the Old Testament says and how it builds toward the New Testament.

It's also very interesting to note in this passage that divorce becomes final when remarriage occurs. It's not so much a legal thing as a relational thing in the Old Testament. If she/he goes and marries another then that divorce has become final. Then there's a sense in Deuteronomy 2:11 that you can't go back.

That's the Old Testament law that we're going to spend a moment on. It probably brings more questions than answers. What does it mean "some indecency"? When is it final? How does it work? To understand that you have to go a little bit further in the Old Testament towards the end of the Old Testament – the book of Malachi. **KEY PASSAGE #2:** Malachi 2:13-16.

This passage leads us to and even answers **KEY QUESTION #2: What does God think of divorce?**

We've just read that it may be permitted under certain circumstances, but what does God think of it? *"Another thing you do, you flood the Lord's altar with tears, you weep and wail because He no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask why. It is because the Lord's acting as a witness between you and the wife of your youth. Because you have broken faith with her though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. Why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit and don't break faith with the wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce,' says the Lord God of Israel. 'I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment.'"*

Why does God hate divorce? Because faith is so important to Him. It says in this passage that it's a breaking of faith. Three ways this is revealed:

1. It's a breaking of faith between us and God. There's probably not a person in this room who's been through a divorce who couldn't talk about the spiritual struggles that you go through when you go through a divorce. Even if it's for all the Biblically right reasons, it's still an incredible spiritual struggle. God hates that.

2. It's a breaking of faith always between husband and wife. And God hates that. He hates the hurt and the pain. It even talks about children in this passage.

3. It's a breaking of faith between parents and children.

Why does God hate divorce? Because it hurts His children. Those of you who are parents, if something hurts your children, what's your attitude towards that thing? If something really deeply hurts one of your children, what's your attitude? God hates divorce because it hurts His children.

He hates what He sees happening to so many. Between 1960 and 1990 in America the divorce rates surged by 350%. It backed off a little bit then. The best estimate is that around 52% of all first marriages today will suffer divorce, compared to only 16% in 1960. Upwards to 70% of second marriages won't endure.

God hates that because He sees the hurt that it brings to His children. There are all kinds of hurt.

It brings financial hurt. Women who go through a divorce, their standard of living immediately drops an average of 40%, sometimes much more.

There's also even health consequences. The National Institute of Health, in studying this, discovered that being a divorced person and a non-smoker is only slightly less dangerous as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day and staying married. Divorced men are twice as likely to die of heart disease, stroke, hypertension, cancer. Divorced women are two or three times likely to die from various forms of cancer. It's tough to be lonely. God hates divorce because it hurts His children.

He also hates it because it hurts our children. One million children each year have to face divorce in the United States. God hates that. Three fifths of all divorces involve minor children. The best estimate is that more than half – about 59% -- of children of baby boom parents will spend at least a year living with only one parent. I don't have to give you any statistics to say that hurts kids because some of you saw your parents go through a divorce. You know how it hurts. One of the most startling of all of the statistics to me is that three of five of those kids felt rejected by one of the parents. God hates divorce because it hurts His children.

When you and I look at the divorce culture we're in, it's easy to become so inundated by it that we forget how much it hurts. We forget how much it's hurting our society. We also forget how much it hurts a friend that's going through a divorce. We also maybe forget how much it hurts our own children who face that.

When God says that He hates divorce and yet earlier in the Bible He permits it, how do you put those two things together? If you don't turn to the New Testament, you're faced with a real conflict. God permits something that He absolutely hates. What am I left with if I've been through a divorce? Absolute guilt. That's what's left. Some of you may be feeling that way right now.

KEY QUESTION #3: What did Jesus have to say?

Jesus talked about divorce on the Sermon on the Mount – **KEY PASSAGE #3**. He repeated that teaching in a longer passage in Matthew 19. Jesus is confronted by the religious leaders and they have a question about divorce. v. 3 *"The Pharisees came to test Him and they asked, 'Is it lawful for man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?'"* Whenever the Pharisees asked a question, you have to ask, Why did they ask that question? This is the place where you and I have to focus in and say, What does this book really say to me? I am extremely aware that the subject of divorce is so personal and hurtful and every individual case is just that – an individual case. It is one of those subjects that can easily create more heat than light. Right now you sort of feel the heat of emotion about it and you miss the joy of what God has to say about it. When you and I can look at what Jesus really had to teach us about this, not afraid, it's incredible the light He can bring into our lives.

He sat down and talked to these Pharisees who said, "Is it permissible for any reason?" They were trying to trap Jesus. There were two main schools of thought about divorce in Jesus' day – the Hillel school and the Shammai school. It's important to understand these because one said (the Hillel school, the liberal school) you can divorce for any reason whatsoever. The Shammai said you can divorce only for sexual immorality. I have a quote from the teaching of Jesus' day: The school of Shammai said "A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found some unchastely in her." The school of Hillel said, "He may divorce her even if she spoiled a dish for him." See the difference? It's a pretty significant difference. Unfaithfulness, adultery, too much salt in the meat – those are two very different views. One rabbi said, "Even if he found another fairer than she it shall be as if she found no favor in his eyes." – She's prettier and that's cause enough, that's some indecency. That's cause enough for divorce.

Knowing human nature, which of the schools do you think was the most popular in Jesus' day? The Pharisees came to ask Jesus this question because they felt if He said, "Yes, you can divorce for any reason," they could say He was denying the Old Testament law. That's not what the law really means and says. You're denying the law of Moses. If He said, "No, the law of Moses says you may not," He might become less popular with the people.

They wanted to put Him in a trap. And Jesus never went for it. They came and asked Him the question,

KEY QUESTION #4: "Is divorce lawful?"

Jesus' answer was, "Wrong question!" That's the wrong question for a believer too. Is it lawful? Jesus went back to the principle of marriage rather than back to the law of Deuteronomy. They come and say, Is it lawful? Jesus says in verse 4, *"Haven't you read that at the beginning the creator made them male and female. For He said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.'"*

These are the teachers of the law. They're supposed to know the law better than anyone. They come and say, Jesus, what's this thing about divorce? Any reason whatsoever? Jesus says, "Haven't you read [They were supposed to have it memorized.] what's on the first page of the book back in Genesis?" He's saying, This is kindergarten stuff for you. Go back to the first page or two and it's right there. Here's the principle: One man, one woman, for life. Go back to the principle, He says to them.

If that's the principle then why in the book of Deuteronomy did Moses command that a man must give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away? Jesus replied, *"Moses permitted you to divorce* [notice the quick change. It's very important. They said "command", Jesus said "permitted".

He wouldn't let them get away with saying that he commanded that they must divorce in that case.] *for one reason.*" God's principle will never change. God's principle is one man, one woman for life because of the unity of marriage. The Bible says He permitted divorce because we have hard hearts. Because we're stubborn. Because we're selfish. Because we want our own way.

I know if you've been through a divorce or ever thought about going through a divorce, it's always the other person who has the hard heart. But we all have to admit that we're stubborn. I'll admit that I'm selfish sometimes. I hope you'll admit that along with me. We all struggle with selfishness. God says, "I see that. I see that you're but dust. I see that you have hard hearts." He permitted it because of hard hearts. But what Jesus was saying about permissiveness was this, "God gave you an inch and you want to take the whole yardstick. You want to just say, Let's do it for any reason. God gave you an emergency escape hatch for the most difficult of circumstances and you want to turn it into an easy exit." God permitted it for hard hearts but Jesus is saying, Realize it's for the most difficult of circumstances.

Many people want to know then, KEY QUESTION #5: What does Jesus think of divorce?

As Jesus goes on to talk with them about this, He tells us very clearly what He thinks of divorce. v 8 *"It was because your hearts were hard. It was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness and marries another woman commits adultery."* Jesus said that choosing divorce – not going through a divorce, but choosing divorce – is committing adultery except in the case of sexual immorality. Do you see that in the Bible? I don't have to teach much, do I? Jesus is doing the teaching. He's saying this is how it is. God never commands a divorce. But He does permit a divorce for one reason and another that we're going to look at in a moment in the book of 1 Corinthians. Here He says that He permits a divorce in the case of marital unfaithfulness.

It's interesting to know that the word there is not the Greek word for adultery. It's the Greek word for immorality of all different kinds – any kind of sexual immorality in a marriage relationship. Jesus says here's the escape clause. Jesus says here's the recognition of hard hearts and that people make decisions to hurt others. But except for this cause, He says, it's a commission of adultery.

Some of you may be thinking, "That wasn't the reason I got divorced." You may be honestly thinking in your heart, maybe for the first time, "I did it for a lot of selfish reasons." You're admitting that what Jesus says is true. You're admitting that the divorce for you was not just a mistake, it was a choice that was a sin.

Let's back up a minute and recognize that everyone in this room is a sinner. Romans 3:23 says *"We've all sinned and fallen short of God's glory."* One of the strange things we do sometimes with divorce sins is put them in a category that's somehow different from all other sins as if you can't be forgiven. So we don't even want to admit that a divorce sin happened in our life because it will put some sort of stigma on you. That God can't use me, I can't be forgiven and I don't know what to do about it.

One of the most refreshing things you can do in life is admit that something you've been trying all the time to justify yourself for is actually something that in your heart was a sin. We're going to talk in a minute about how God responds when we do that.

Jesus said that there were certain circumstances where divorce could happen. It didn't say it must happen, but He said here's a possible time when it might happen.

So the question that comes out of that for many people is,
KEY QUESTION #6: "Is remarriage ever permissible?"

If Jesus said it's ok to divorce, is He saying it's ok to remarry? Or do you just get divorced and you can't ever marry again? The answer to that from the teaching of scriptures, "Yes, remarriage is permissible." If divorce is permissible then remarriage is permissible.

By permissible, understand what I mean. God permits us to sin. We're permitted to do a lot of things that are wrong. By the word permissible there I mean, Is it ever Biblically right to remarry? Let me show you the teachings that the church has had from the very beginning about this. There have been four of them. I want you to understand them so you can have a knowledge of what Christians have taught for 2000 years on this issue. Four views:

1. No divorce, no remarriage.
2. Divorce, but no remarriage.
3. Divorce and remarriage for adultery or desertion.
4. Divorce and remarriage under a variety of circumstances.

The one I believe and am teaching is the third – divorce and remarriage for adultery and desertion. But I want to be honest with you, you can teach the second one from the Bible. You can teach divorce and no remarriage from the Bible. I don't agree with those who teach that but you can teach that. I don't think you can teach the first one – no divorce, no remarriage – because obviously we just read a verse where Jesus said it's permitted. You have to do a lot of gymnastics to say it's not permitted in that case. The fourth one allows divorce for whatever reason.

Why I wanted to tell you that is this: When you read about divorce and remarriage for a couple of reasons in the Bible that's about the furthest point you can take scripture to. Some may think, let's take it one step further. If a pastor can take it this far, I can take it one step further. If you and I want to be faithful to God's word and what's right for our lives that's the teaching that God gives to us. By the way, all of these teaching agree on one thing: God's best is one man and one woman for life.

Our last passage to look at – KEY PASSAGE #4 -1 Corinthians 7. It has some more light to give us. Jesus says if I choose to divorce for selfish reasons, if I choose to divorce because of the stubbornness and hardness of my heart, Jesus says it's a sin. But what if someone chooses to divorce me? It's not my choice. What if the papers are filed on me? What happens in that circumstance? Is that other person causing me to sin in that situation? And does that other person's sin mean I can never be remarried? If all we had was this verse, there would be a lot of questions about it. But there's another verse that gives us some very clear answers to the most common questions I get about divorce.

1 Corinthians 7 answers KEY QUESTION #7: What if I'm married to an unbeliever?

I'm a believer in Christ. I want to follow Christ. But they don't have the same kind of faith. In 1 Corinthians 7 it says don't be unequally yoked with an unbeliever, does that mean God wants me to leave that unbeliever? If you're trying to be faithful to the Lord, that might be an honest question.

God gives us an honest answer. This is a very key passage. He talks first of all to married people. Then he talks in verse 8 to the unmarried and the widows and says it's good for them to stay unmarried. But if they can't control themselves they should marry – better that than to burn with passion.

Later He's going to say, the reason he's giving this advise is because they're going through a persecution and it's better for them just to stay where they are right now. It's not time to marry. He's not devaluing marriage but recognizing the situation.

Then he says to the married, *"I give this command. A wife must not separate from her husband. If she does [if she chooses to sin, if she makes that choice to sin] she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. A husband may not divorce his wife. But to the rest I say this. If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him he must not divorce her."* And just to be real clear: If a woman has a husband and he's willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

So there's your answer. The answer is it makes no difference whether they're a believer or unbeliever. God's standard, God's great plan for marriage is still the same. You're still one.

KEY QUESTION #8: What if the unbelieving husband or wife leaves me?

I think it's very significant that the Bible doesn't even ask, What if the believing husband or wife leaves me? Earlier it had said if they leave you have to remain unmarried. There's an idea in the Bible, that if you're a believer in Christ, you're going to find a way in Christ to make a decision in Christ. You and I are so inundated by our society that sometimes it shouts louder than God's word.

What if they leave me? In v. 15 it says *"If the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances. God has called us to live in peace."* People have argued about what means for a long time. I think it means you're not bound. In fact, the words "not bound" were in a lot of divorce decrees at that time. It has the idea that you're free to remarry in that circumstance. If you're a believer and the unbeliever leaves you, you don't have to chase them all over the country to try to get them to remarry you.

If you're an believer and a believer acts like an unbeliever and leaves you, what do you do in that circumstance? You'd better pray real hard about what God wants you to do in that circumstance. I think that's one of those circumstances you have to take on a case by case basis. I've found people who want to pretend like the believer who left them was really an unbeliever all along so they can be free. God wants us to engage in those kinds of mental gymnastics. What He wants is one man, one woman for life. That's what He wants. That's what He desires.

We talked earlier about the first cause for divorce, which was adultery. The second cause is abandonment. By the way, when Paul, in this passage says, "This is a word from me... this is a word from the Lord," some people think that means it's not authoritative. That's not what it means at all. It means "I can quote Jesus on this one... On this other I don't have a direct quote of Jesus." In all the passages that Paul wrote, he's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So whether Jesus said it or Paul wrote it, it's just as inspired by the Holy Spirit. It's all the Bible. It's just as inspired.

Let me ask some practical questions I think are key. I would think that there are many questions that, in a practical way, you're struggling with right now. I'm here, with all of you to face them head on. These are the questions that people are asking me and these are the answers that the Bible has to give.

KEY QUESTION #9: What are some of the things that can help prevent a divorce?

We've talked about when you can and when you can't, what about preventing it? Two practical ideas

from God's word:

1. Focus less on yourself. I want to say this understanding the pain of divorce that many of you have been through, the circumstances that many of you have been through and how unusual and horrible those were. I'm not diminishing that with the statement I'm going to make in just a moment. It's still true that the number one cause of divorce is selfishness. That's why we divorce. Because we're selfish. We've just got to admit that as a society, admit that as families, admit that as individuals. That's why it happens. Focus less on yourself.

2. Focus more on God. Jesus' parents were almost divorced. Matthew 1:19 *"Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose Mary to public disgrace [she was pregnant and he didn't know how yet] he had it in mind to divorce her quietly."* Then, when you were engaged, before marriage, before you had even come together in marriage, it was still a divorce. That engagement was a commitment. It would have been a divorce in Jesus' own family. There would have been a divorce in Jesus' family if God hadn't intervened. But God did and He sent an angel. He met with Joseph and gave him a message that changed their lives.

What if we could really apply Philippians 2:3 *"When you do things do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead be humble and give more honor to others than yourself."* You and I as believers in Christ have the power to apply that verse. Those who don't know Christ don't. Some of you were divorced before you came to know Christ.

Many of you, you didn't have the power then to apply this verse. Now that you do, don't fail to miss the significance of saying, "God, would You help me to be unselfish in this situation?" In an argument, when the heat starts to rise and then it goes on day after day, doesn't this selfishness factor start to rise? It does for me. I tend to just think about myself and how I can win this thing. It happens to all of us. So we have to say, "God, help me focus less on myself."

That's true for some of you. There's going to be a divorce if God doesn't intervene. Focus on God. A picture of relationships – how we relate to one another:

Sometimes in marriage, you have the husband on one side and the wife on the other, and we're trying to draw a straight line and make the relationship work between one another. But there's a lot of struggle, a lot of barriers, and sometimes it's pretty tough to get through those struggles and barriers when you're working on a two-way relationship. How do you prevent divorce? The best advice I can give you is to say, instead of a two way relationship, turn it into a three-way relationship. Not just husband and wife, but husband, wife, and God. Recognizing that we do struggle on a human plane getting closer to each other sometimes. But when I involve God in my relationship and you and I both are trying to get closer to Him in a marriage, as you're getting closer to God, who else are you getting closer to? Your marriage partner. Focus on God.

This is foundational. Some of you are thinking, "The truth is, our problem is finances. That's what we're fighting about all the time." That may very well be true. But you've got to get God involved first before you can solve the problem of finances. Those need to be solved. But don't try to solve it yourself and then go back to God. Maybe your problem is communication. Get Him involved first. And then work on communication by going to a counselor. Don't hear me saying, All you have to have is God and all the problems will go away. What I'm saying is you'd better get God first and then work on the problems. Maybe the problem is sex. Get God involved in your sex life!

KEY QUESTION #10: Why would God want two people to stay together even if they

dislike – even hate – each other? Why would God want that? It doesn't make sense.

First, of all realize that the dislike, the hate, is coming from our own hearts. If the other person is a brother or sister in Christ, here's what 1 John 2 has to say about it, "*Whoever hates a brother or sister lives in darkness and does not know where to go because the darkness has made that person blind.*"

The Bible says that whether it's someone I'm married to or a brother or sister here at church, if I say, "I hate that person!" I'd better look at myself. I'm in darkness.

One psychologist has calculated that romantic love tends to last no more than three to five years, especially when the two participants are under the same roof. That's when it really struggles. Commitment rather than love holds a marriage together during the tough times.

KEY QUESTION #11: If God forgives divorce like He forgives all sin, can't I get a divorce and then ask God to forgive me of the sin?

This is a honest question, a question many of you may have thought of. Let me picture for you what you're saying when you say that. It's like saying, Can't I cut off my right arm and then ask God to help me use only my left arm for the rest of my life? You could ask God to do that. Yes. But you're living life with a great pain, a great hurt. That very question assumes there's no pain in sin. There's incredible pain in sin. Will God forgive you if you ask Him, if you've been through the pain of divorce? Absolutely. Yet when you and I face a difficult situation and the relationship isn't working, let's be honest. All we want to do is escape the pain. It hurts so bad. I just want to get out.

You're not escaping your pain. You're choosing your pain. You're choosing whether you're going to go through the short term pain of trying to make a relationship work or the long term pain of a divorce. I've been at the weddings hundreds of times where both families are there and see the pain 15-20 years later. I've been at the graduation. The pain of divorce – we could have many of you talk first hand about the pain. Those of you who have been through a divorce would be able better than I to say, God's word is right on this. The pain doesn't end. You'd be able to say better than me, You're not escaping pain by getting out of a marriage. You're choosing your pain. It's important to realize that sin sometimes brings instant gratification. You feel better immediately. There's pleasure in sin for a season but then you have to face long term pain.

On the other hand, sometimes obedience is tough at first. But the gratification that comes later is incredible. It can be a lifetime of gratification.

Some of you might be thinking, "But I'm not the one you need to be talking to." God said this to us, not because He wants to bring rules to our lives but because He loves us. He hates divorce because it hurts His children.

Does this mean if I'm being abused by somebody, I can't be separated from them? Is that what the Bible says? When did I or God's word say that? That's not what the Bible says. If you're being abused by somebody – physically abused – you should be separated in most circumstances. God doesn't ask you to face the danger of death. That's ridiculous. And those who try to take God's word that far are reading into the Bible something that's not there.

KEY QUESTION #12: What do you do with feelings that you can no longer stay in the

marriage?

In those really tough times in life those crossroads we all face five or six times in our lives, we have to decide, Who am I going to trust? You wouldn't believe how many times I've sat across from somebody and talked about this and said, Here's what the word says. And, Can you give it just a little bit longer? Just give God some time to work. Go to counseling. Don't give up so easily. Because the pain that's going to be there is guaranteed. You wouldn't believe how many times this phrase has come back to me: But, God wants me happy.

If you really believe that God wants you happy, how come you can't trust Him for your happiness? Why do we say, "God wants me happy. God wants me to have joy. I know how to get my happiness." That doesn't make any sense at all. If I really believe that God wants me happy, then I'll trust Him for my happiness.

And any married couple can tell you this: The happiness, the joy of marriage, you don't get it without some pain. You don't get it without some suffering. If two people are going to relate to one another on that level, there's going to be some selfishness that's going to be laid down.

And when I have to lay a little bit of my selfishness down, it hurts. Really bad sometimes. So God says, Who are you going to trust? When it comes to establishing a standard for morality, who's the ruler? When you need an ethical compass to find your way out of a ethical jungle, where's north? When you're on the storm sea of emotion, where's the lighthouse?

Its so easy to trust our emotions in that case and then six months, I've seen it happen so many times, many people – up to a year later - they say I wish I hadn't. I wish I'd given it a little more. I wish I'd given God an opportunity to work. I wish I'd gone to counseling. I wish we'd sat down together and talked. I find that many people that go through divorce, have never even talked because of the very nature of what they're going through.

A study of divorced couples with preschool children shows that just one year after divorce, 60% of the men and 73% of the women said, "I wish we'd tried harder. We made a mistake."

KEY QUESTION #13: Can God forgive me of my sin?

Listen to Micah 7:18-19 (NCV) – it says, “There is no God like You. You forgive those who are guilty of sin; You don’t look at the sins of Your people who are left alive. You will not stay angry forever, because You enjoy being kind. You will have mercy on us again; You will conquer our sins. You will throw away all our sins into the deepest part of the sea.”

Folks, God can forgive any sin – any sin except the sin of rejecting His son Jesus Christ. So, yea, he can and will forgive the sin of divorce.

SO WHAT?

Let’s focus on Jesus as we close. Folks, Jesus came into that kind of world and He changed it. He changed history. We look at our world today and we see the struggles we're facing in the divorce culture we're in. Jesus can do it again. But it's not going to begin with those who don't know Christ. It's going to begin with those who do know Christ – you and I who are in Christ.

As we've looked together straightforwardly what God's word has to say about this, it's my deepest prayer that God takes His word and applies it to your particular situation. The thing I have some fear about is I don't know your situation. But I do know this book and I tried to faithfully as I can say, Here's what's in this book. Now you as a believer in Christ have the responsibility to take what's in this book and apply it to your situation. It's not what I think about you that's so important. It's not even what you think is so important. It's what God thinks that's so important. And it's my prayer that it can change your history because of what we have looked at together from God's word.

I know that this study has the potential to bring a lot of pain to the forefront of a lot of lives. I understand that pain. Any of you who've been around COV know that I experienced the pain of divorce as a child – watching my parents go through one.

As a pastor, I have seen the pain of divorce in kids and in families. In men and women. I've witnessed the destruction and devastation. This is why God hates divorce and hates sin. This is why Jesus came.

Folks, we have had to fight for our marriages to make them what God would have them be. We have to fight if we are going to have good, solid, God-honoring marriages. Folks, great marriages – good marriages – solid marriages are not an accident or luck. Great marriages don't come easy. You have to fight for every inch of ground. Then and only then will you make it by God's grace. Will you commit to fighting and working for your marriage right now?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT DIVORCE - Outline

KEY PASSAGE #1: Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (NIV)

*“If a man marries a woman who becomes **displeasing to him** because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house...”*

KEY QUESTION #1: Is divorce ever permitted?

➤ Divorce is permitted in the case of “ _____ ”

➤ Divorce is not final until _____

KEY PASSAGE #2: Malachi 2:12-16 (NIV)

*“**I hate divorce,**’ says the Lord God of Israel... ` So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.”*

KEY QUESTION #2: What does God think of divorce?

God _____ divorce!

It is a breaking of faith:

➤ Between _____ and _____

➤ Between _____ and _____

➤ Between _____ and _____

KEY PASSAGE #3: Matthew 19:3-10 (NIV)

*“Some Pharisees came to Him to test Him. They asked, `Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?’ `Haven’t you read,’ He replied, `that **at the beginning** the Creator made them male and female,”*
Matthew 19:3-4 (NIV)

“`Why then,’ they asked, `did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?’ Jesus replied, `Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” **Matthew 19:7-9 (NIV)**

Luke 16:17-18 (NIV) Matthew 5:31-32 (NIV)

Two “schools” of divorce in Jesus’ day:

Hillel School: divorce for any way of displeasing
Shammai School: Divorce only sexual immorality.

KEY QUESTION #3: Is divorce lawful?

Jesus' Answer: _____ !

KEY QUESTION #4: Why did God permit divorce?

Because we have _____ .

KEY QUESTION #5: What does Jesus think of divorce?

Jesus said choosing divorce is _____

Except: In the case of sexual immorality

The Greek word here is *pornia* (immorality), not *moicheia* (adultery).

KEY QUESTION #6: Is remarriage ever permissible?

Answer: _____

Four Christian views

No divorce and no remarriage

Divorce but no remarriage

Divorce and remarriage for adultery or desertion

Divorce and remarriage under a variety of circumstances

KEY PASSAGE #4: 1 Corinthians 7:10-15 (NIV)

“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.”
1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (NIV)

“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. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to let her do so, a believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.” 1 Corinthians 7:12-13, 15 (NIV)

KEY QUESTION #7: What if I'm married to an unbeliever?

KEY QUESTION #8: What if an unbelieving husband or wife leaves me?

KEY QUESTION #9: What are some things that could help prevent a divorce?

Two places to start

Focus less on _____ Focus more on _____

“When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves.” **Philippians 2:3 (NCV)**

KEY QUESTION #10: Why would God want two people to stay together if they dislike (hate) each other?

“Whoever hates a brother or sister is in darkness, lives in darkness, and does not know where to go, because the darkness has made that person blind.” **1 John 2:11 (NCV)**

KEY QUESTION #11: Can't I get a divorce and ask God to forgive me of my sin?

KEY QUESTION #12: What do you do with feelings that you can no longer stay in the marriage?

Decide _____

It's likely that one day you'll say _____.

KEY QUESTION #13: Can God forgive the sin of divorce?

“There is no God like You. You forgive those who are guilty of sin; You don't look at the sins of Your people who are left alive. You will not stay angry forever, because You enjoy being kind. You will have mercy on us again; You will conquer our sins. You will throw away all our sins into the deepest part of the sea.” **Micah 7:18-19 (NCV)**

SO WHAT?