



Radio  
Script

Divorce:  
A Biblical View.

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Once upon a time there was a money miser who argued vigorously with a joy-ride pilot at an air show over the cost of taking this man and his wife up for a spin.

Eventually the pilot became so irate over the haggling that he made up his mind to teach the man a lesson. He offered to take the couple up, free of charge, provided the gentleman would not utter a single syllable during the entire flight. If he did, the cost would be \$500. The scrooge, pretty sure he could be tight lipped as well as tight fisted, agreed.

The pilot fitted the couple into the rear open cockpit of his ancient tiger moth and put an headset microphone on the man so that he could hear if he spoke.

Once they were in the air, the pilot went into a routine of every aerobatic manoeuvre in the book. Looping the loop, barrel rolls, vertical climbs, stall and flat spins and power dives with last-minute re-climb.

Through it all, to the pilots great surprise, the fellow behind him didn't even raise a murmur or gasp. So as they were landing, the pilot congratulated the man over the intercom, and admitted that he was astonished at his ability to remain silent.

"Yes", replied the passenger, "it was easy enough to start with, but I had to bite my tongue a bit when my wife fell out."

So I ask you, "What is the **value** of a wife? What is the value of **your wife**? What is the value of **you as a wife**?"

Hello, This is Lionel Hartley. In today's radio programme I will be talking about the subject of Divorce from two perspectives, both biblical. The first is based on the biblical account of creation and the second on the biblical concept of re-creation.

In order for us to get the most out of what I am about to present today, I would request that we approach this subject in the spirit of John 3:17. "Jesus came not into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved." In order for us to extend God's saving grace to our reading of the Biblical View of Divorce, we need to accept Jesus' attitude, and not condemn. I will also need your help as I request that, as I had to when preparing this broadcast, that you endeavour to put aside pre-conceived ideas & listen to what Jesus has to say to us today.

I guess the first thing I should say before opening the Word of God is: before divorce or separation, try marriage. Many people are wedded but they are not truly married. A wedding is not the same as a marriage - a wedding is the uniting of two people, a marriage is the uniting of two persons. Archibald Hart described it as "the union of two incompatible people in an impossible relationship (with) the task (from) God ... to turn it into something beautiful." (Healing Life's Addictions, Servant, Michigan, 1990, p164)



Marriage is the union of two persons with separate personalities

I read from Matthew 19 verses 3-10: "3. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7. Then say unto him, Why did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?

8. He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

10. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

When I was overseas in the mid 1970s, as part of a course in Sociology, I studied Anthropology under the late Dr Margaret Mead. She said, "The reasons for and the frequency of divorce show that marriage cannot work, so let's abolish marriage."

Jesus' disciples had same idea, as we see from Matthew 19:10: "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

It is even remotely possible that they knew the words of Socrates who, three hundred years earlier, had told his pupil Plato, "If you don't marry you'll regret it and if you do marry you'll also regret it."

Jesus, however had a high view of marriage and a low view of divorce.

For the disciples, the question about marriage was the ease of getting unmarried.

"If it is so hard to get unhitched why bother to get hitched? If it is so hard to get divorced why bother to get harnessed? If it is so hard to break a vow why bother to make a vow? If it is so hard to get un-married why bother to get married? If it is so hard to get separated why bother to get conjugated? If it is so hard to get out why bother to get in? If wedlock is deadlock why bother to padlock?"

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is discussed in Matthew 19:3-10.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 reads, "1. When a man hath taken a wife and married her and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

2. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

3. And if the latter husband hate her, and write a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

4. Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

It is from this passage that, according to Pharasees, Moses commanded divorce. Lets just pause a moment to pursue this further.

In the Bible, there are two types of law: Absolute Law and Case Law.

In Absolute Law, specific commands are provided and the general principles are provided to apply in any situation. Absolute Law does not give the fine details for specific circumstances but it relies on the interpretation of the general principles.

Case or Conditional Law is easily distinguished from Absolute Law, because Case Law follows a specific formula. Case Law is written using what is known as the 'When and Then' literary device. WHEN (or if) such-and-such...THEN this is the command for that particular set of circumstances. This is the 'When and Then' formula for case law.

In Deuteronomy 24:1 and following, what were the specific circumstances? In the King James (or Authorised) Translation we usually read 2 parts and then the command. Ancient manuscripts have seven parts in verses 1-3, then the command in verse 4.

Let me illustrate. The King James Translation reads, "When a man hath taken a wife and married her and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: **THEN** let him write a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

But the paragraph doesn't end there. As I said before, the ancient manuscripts have seven parts in verses 1-3, then the command in verse 4.

**One:** "When a man hath taken a wife and married her"

**Two:** "and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her:"

**Three:** "then let him write a bill of divorcement,"

**Four:** "and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house."

**Five:** "And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife."

**Six:** "And if the latter husband hate her, and write a bill of divorcement,"

**Seven:** "and give it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;"

**THEN:** (Verse 4, "Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.")

So you see God doesn't command divorce at all.

Malachi 2:14-16 in the Revised Standard Version reads, "14. ...The LORD is acting as the 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.



15. Has not the LORD God made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

16. 'I hate divorce,' says the LORD God of Israel... So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith."

It is evident from Matthew and from history that the Schools of Rabbis in Jesus' day preferred Deuteronomy.

The schools of Shammai and Hillael agreed with divorce but disagreed over the grounds for divorce.

What are the grounds for divorce? Matthew 19:9 reads "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

But, as I said, the Rabbis preferred Deuteronomy: "When a man hath taken a wife and married her and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write a bill of divorcement..."

Furthermore the Rabbis placed their emphasis on a certain place in the verses in Deuteronomy: ~~the 'uncleanness' in something.~~ *part.*

The School of Rabbi Shammai placed the emphasis on uncleanness in something - This <sup>uncleanness</sup> ~~something~~, according to Rabbi Shammai, refers to sexual misconduct, when she fish-hooks another. In other words, how she hooks!

The School of Rabbi Hillel placed the emphasis on uncleanness in **something** - Anything, even failing to balance the budget. In other words, not just how she hooks but how she books!

Anything, said Rabbi Hillel, even if she burns the food.

In other words, not just how she hooks or how she books, but how she cooks!

Another contemporary school, the School of Rabbi Akebra, by way of contrast, placed the emphasis on the part of the verse that says, "because she has found no favour **in his eyes**". Therefore Rabbi Akebra recommended divorce if the husband found another woman who was more beautiful.

In other words, not just how she hooks, or how she books, or how she cooks but how she looks!

Just when it was starting to get ridiculous, Jesus transcended all Rabbinic interpretations. He said, (Matthew 19:4 and 7: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female... Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

Jesus regarded divorce as a concession due to hardness of heart.

Jesus also regarded divorce as a limitation on hardness to prevent damage to women, whom Jesus always held in the highest esteem.

Jesus <sup>referred</sup> ~~referred~~ to God's will in creation by saying it was not so from the beginning. Well, what was so from the beginning? Matthew 19:4 and 5 reads,

"4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"

Here Jesus is quoting two verses from the Torah which we can read in Genesis 1:27: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God, created he him; male and female he created them." and Genesis 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

This two-fold reference by Jesus assures us that what God ordained at the beginning is what was always to be.

Society has the tendency to divide and God has the tendency to unite.

Genesis 1:27 emphasises maleness and femaleness - a unique TwOness; Genesis 2:24 emphasises the marriage union - a unique ONEness.

And remember that these two verses were read together by Jesus.

The creation of two different sexes finds resolution in oneness. Marriage is God's plan to end disunity.

We recognise that there exists a divine gift of singleness but yet we cannot ignore this divine complementary in marriage. And it is because of this divine complementary in marriage that makes divorce not creation but destruction.

O.K. Jesus has quoted the text, now he draws his conclusion. Verse 6: "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." In other words, do not follow man's will, but God's will.

Then in verse 9 Jesus draws another conclusion: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away (except it be for fornication) doth commit adultery."

This again emphasises God's high view of marriage. Divorce is a slap at God, for divorce is really both a social and a spiritual problem. Matthew 19 Verse 11 raises a very important question for you and for me: Is this command too much for me to bear or is it God's protection to keep me from bearing too much?



These people were held in contempt by the orthodox Jews and, in fact, the very name 'Samaria' is an Hebrew word of contempt. For this reason (and because she was a woman) the woman at the well was astonished that Jesus, an orthodox Jew would even speak to her.

Leslie D. Weatherhead in his book, *His Life and Ours*, on page 34 says "A Jew talking to a Samaritan. What a scandal! A Jewish man talking to a Samaritan woman. What an outrage! A Jewish rabbi talking to a Samaritan prostitute, incredible!"

Jesus gently stated that if she knew who he was she would understand. He then proceeded to reveal that he knew who she was. He said that, if she sought, living water of eternal life was freely available for her, in spite of the fact that she had been divorced five times and was now living in a de-facto relationship. When she asked for this water, as recorded in John 4:15, Jesus invited her to bring her de-facto husband to him for reconciliation too. What a tremendous example for us!

I started this broadcast by saying that I would be talking about the subject of Divorce from two biblical perspectives based on the biblical account of creation and the concept of re-creation.

Re-creation is really another just way of looking at the perfect creation principle of redemption. Over four thousand summers and winters have come and gone since creation, so does it still apply? Jesus, as we saw in Matthew 19 was speaking to fallen people. Jesus too can redeem us from our fallenness - 'God's will through redemption' means that where we have fallen he can lift us up.

Let me share with you a story found in John 8:1-11 to help us grasp the enormity of this concept: "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the oldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man. Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more". This is God's word for the victims of divorce

And now a final re-creative word from God as penned by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 54. The first few verses offer comfort to the infertile. The words of comfort are then directed at the widow and those who are divorced. Verses 5 to 10, in part, say, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. / For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. / For a small moment I have forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. / In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.... my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee."