

Understanding Divorce & Remarriage in the Bible

A Challenging and Sensitive topic

Old Testament Writing and Culture

Purpose of Marriage (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5; See also seminar #2)

Ancient Near-Eastern marriages

Divorce in the Old Testament

Context (Deuteronomy 22:13-15, 19, 28-29; 24:1)

Permitted reasons for divorce (Exodus 21:10-11; Matthew 19:9)

The rise of divorce for 'any cause'

"If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds [something indecent about her] / [a cause of sexual immorality], and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house," (Deuteronomy 24:1)



New Testament Writing and Culture

Matthew 19

³ *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?"*

⁴ *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."*¹

⁷ *"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"*

⁸ *Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning."⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."*

1 Corinthians 7

When does a marriage end?

(See Matthew 19:6, 9; 1 Corinthians 6:16, 7:39)

Remarriage

(See 1 Corinthians 7:10-13, 15, 20, 39)

What this means in our context

Questions

¹ Jesus' teaching here on marriage should also be understood as a judgement against polygamy, with his emphasis that two will become one flesh. The word 'two' does not originally appear in Genesis 2.

