

Sunday, November 13, 2016—I Corinthians 7:10-16: Divorce During the Dispensation of Grace

Introduction

- This morning in our study of I Corinthians 7 we are going to begin looking at a new section of the chapter.
- Verse 10 marks the beginning of a new paragraph as well as a new topic, divorce.
- Much has been said in Christian circles about the issues of divorce and remarriage. Many view divorce as some sort of unpardonable sin or as a disqualifier for all forms of service in the local church.
- It has often been said that half of all marriages end in divorce. Recent writing on the topic have challenged this conclusion citing that no credible sociological study has ever proven that statistic. A recent study, cited by [Christianity Today](#), claims that Protestant couples who are active in their local churches are 35% less like to get divorced.
- We have people in this assembly who have experienced the pain of divorce. We have people in this assembly who have remarried after a previous divorce. We might even have some folks that are privately contemplating divorce as we speak.
- We need to approach this topic with some sensitivity toward those who have had a different experience from our own.
- Before studying the details of I Corinthians 7:10-16. it seems prudent to consider some general things from God's word regarding the topic of divorce.
- I ask that as we do this you grant me the courtesy of a fair hearing. In order to fully and adequately cover this topic it will require more than one study.

What is Divorce?

- Matthew 19:3-8—divorce was not part of God's original plan. Divorce is a human invention.
- Because of the hardness of their hearts God suffered it and permitted it. Therefore, the Bible recognizes divorces and regulates it.
- Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines divorce as follows:
 - A legal dissolution of the bonds of matrimony, or the separation of husband and wife by a judicial sentence. This is properly called a *divorce* and called technically, *divorce a vinculo matrimonii*.

- The separation of a married woman from the bed and board of her husband, a mensa et thoro.
- Separation; disunion of things closely united.
- The sentence or writing by which marriage is dissolved.
- The cause of any penal separation.
- Divorce is the formal ending of a marriage. People have all kinds of different ideas about divorce.
 - Husband and wife are eternally married in the eyes of God. If one gets remarried they are committing adultery against their former spouse before God.
- All divorces are not sinful, but sin leads to divorce.
- If one is going to properly understand divorce, they first need to properly understand what marriage is.
- Exodus 22:16-17—the sexual relations did not marry them. Marriage is more than a physical relationship.
- John 4:16-18—this woman has had five husbands but Christ tells her that she does not currently have a husband. Simply living in a relationship of sexual intimacy does not equal marriage.
- Malachi 2:14—fundamentally marriage is a contractual relationship for a life-long companionship.
 - Hosea 2:19-20—betrothment means: “A mutual promise or contract between two parties, for a future marriage between the persons betrothed; espousals.” (*Webster’s 1828*)
- Divorce then is the formal legal ending of a marriage.
- Malachi 2:16—I would never tell you that God doesn’t hate divorce. But this verse cannot be used as a blanket statement about every divorce.
 - Ezra 10:1-6, 11, 19—113 divorces occur in a time of spiritual renewal and repentance to God.
 - Jeremiah 3:8—God divorced the 10 Northern Tribes of Israel because of their spiritual adultery and fornication.
- Deuteronomy 24:1—states the three components of divorce in the Bible.
 - “let him write her a bill of divorcement”—formal written document, ensures a deliberate and thought-out action.

- “give it into her hand”—bill of divorcement is to be personally delivered thereby ensuring personal ownership by the one requesting the divorce.
- “send her out of his house”—sending the wife out of the house is emblematic of a formal rupture of the terms of companionship.
- Deuteronomy 24:2—even under the Law the divorced woman is free to remarry, when she does so she is the other man’s wife.

The Bitterness of Winter

- Genesis 1:14-19—God placed the planetary bodies into the second heaven to give light upon the earth but also to serve for signs and for seasons.
- Many things in our earthly existence can be compared to the passing of the seasons. Strauss and Howe in their book *The Fourth Turning* compare the historical life cycle of a nation to the passing of the seasons.
- Dr. Gary Chapman author of the *Five Love Languages* which we talked about last week has also written a book entitled *The Four Seasons of Marriage*
- Marriage relationships are constantly changing. Attitudes shift, emotions fluctuate, and the way spouses treat each other ebbs and flows between loving and not loving.
- Some changes are beyond our control (medical diagnosis). Other changes we create for ourselves, but sometimes with unexpected consequences (moving).
- In the natural world, the four seasons are created by certain inevitable changes that occur as the earth turns on its axis and revolves around the sun. Likewise, the changes we face in life (and the way we process and respond to them) creates the seasons of marriage.
- The combination of our emotions, attitudes, and actions will determine which season our marriage is in at any given time. We feel emotions; develop attitudes based on those emotions which in turn spur us to action. The interweaving of our emotions, attitudes, and actions creates the quality of our relationship in the various seasons of marriage.
- As we look to understand and address the issues of divorce and remarriage in the coming weeks it is important to realize that divorces are not contemplated and do not occur in either the Spring or Summer seasons.

Winter

<i>Emotions</i>	Hurt, anger, disappointment, loneliness, feeling rejected
<i>Attitudes</i>	Negativity, discouragement, frustration, hopelessness
<i>Actions</i>	Destructive, speaking harshly, not speaking, violent
<i>Climate of Relationship</i>	Detached, cold, harsh, bitter. In the winter season of marriage, couples are unwilling to negotiate differences. Conversations turn to arguments, or spouses withdraw in silence. There is no sense of togetherness. The marriage is like two people living in separate igloos.