



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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JUMP START #284

Matt. 19:9- “And I say unto you, whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another woman, commits adultery.”

We are looking at a radical statement of Jesus. Our Lord didn't take a poll of his audience and find out what they would like him to speak on. On one occasion he disciples even said, “You offend the people.” Truth can do that. It has a way of making us upset because we don't want to change or admit that what is true.

Our passage today is about divorce. Many have no idea that Jesus even said anything about divorce. Our society has given up on what Jesus said. Current statistics show that people change mates more often than they change cars. The reasons for divorce are numerous such as, money problems, in-law issues, unfaithfulness, jealousy, he changed, we married too young, she doesn't make me happy any more and just about everything else. This isn't new.

Our passage is found in a context in which the Pharisees were trying to prove that Jesus wasn't the Messiah. He didn't fit their image and more so, he was saying things that they didn't like. So they set a trap for Jesus. Get him into a theological jungle where he will trip himself over the law of Moses and they will have him. I expect the Pharisee hierarchy met in secret corners tossing around questions and situations until they landed this one. They are not so much concerned about divorce as they are disproving Jesus.

Our section begins, “Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing him and asking, ‘is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?’ Can I get a divorce for any reason? That's the question. Jesus answers. He doesn't say, “Here is how I see it.” Nor did he say, “I think....” He went to the Bible. He went before the Law of Moses to the book of Genesis where God first made man and woman and marriage. Jesus went to the beginning, the intent of God. In verse six Jesus says, “ what therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” That's the answer. Do not divide what God has joined. The answer is NO. No, you cannot get a divorce for any reason. NO, it is not lawful. NO is what God says. NO is what the Bible says.

Before we go on with this section of scripture, let me take a detour and explain something. We are talking about lawful with God. Society will allow things that God does not. A person can get drunk in the privacy of their home. That is not against the law. It is with God. Our society will allow (lawful) a woman to get an abortion. That's not God's law. So a couple CAN get a divorce for any reason. It happens everyday. The law of the land allows it. The law of God does not. When a person violates the law of God,

they sin. The law of God comes before the law of the land. The law of the land is weak and follows the whims of people who want to do what they want to do. The law of God honors God and it is that law that will judge us on the last day. This is important to understand.

The discussion continues. The Pharisees didn't get the answer from Jesus they anticipated. So, they pressed him more. Moses, they said commanded a divorce. Now, they put Moses, who was instructed by God vs. God himself. Which one are you going to defend, Jesus? Our Lord reminded them that Moses ALLOWED (not commanded) a divorce and the reason was because of the hardness of the nation's heart. But it was not this way from the beginning. Jesus returns to the beginning. Then comes to our verse. To divorce and marry another is to commit the sin of adultery. The only exception is if the divorce is for fornication, all others are wrong.

What about, "I don't love him anymore?" Nope. What about she spends all the money? Nope. Gambling? Nope. Doing drugs? Nope. He's a bum? Nope. Won't cook? Nope. Won't take care of the kids? Nope. What if I find someone better? Nope. What if he doesn't talk? Nope. Snoring? Nope. Bad breath? Nope. Control freak? Nope. Drunk? Nope. Is an IU fan? (just threw that in to see if you're staying with me) Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope.

One exception.....unfaithfulness. This is radical. This is narrow. This is hard. So hard, the disciples say in the next verse, "If the relationship of the man and his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." They understood what Jesus was saying. We may have the opposite response....I just can't accept that. That can't be right. Not today. No way. Are you sure?

Marriage is serious. It should not be entered on a whim or in a moment of drunkenness or on a challenge. Your marriage will affect your relationship with God. I encourage you to read **Matthew 19:1-10**. A couple needs to have God as the foundation of their marriage. Divorce shouldn't be used as a threat or even spoken in the home. It's not an option. To get a divorce means someone has been unfaithful---that is sinful. What if I get a divorce for another reason? I have done wrong. That's what Jesus is saying. This is serious. Couples that do not share a love and commitment to God's word have nothing holding them together other than their fragile love. Promises are cheaply spoken and cheaply kept.

So, what's a person to do? First, follow Jesus. That has been the theme of these Jump Starts from day one. Follow Jesus completely and totally. Not from a distance. Not just on Sundays. Learn to think like Jesus. Act like Jesus. Compassion, grace, forgiveness, and a love for God's truth, dominates those who follow Jesus. Stick to what God says. When your marriage starts to head towards the rocks, do something. Many wait too late. When you are going over the waterfalls, it's too late to pray for oars. Get into a church that is serious about God's word and following the New Testament example. Get counseling. Talk. Pray. Work at it. It's not easy, but neither are the things that chip away at a marriage. But divorce is not a choice, unless one has been unfaithful.

Jesus is radical. Most churches have given up on what Jesus said about divorce. They have thrown in the towel. Few preachers even talk about this anymore. But there it remains in our Bible—unchanged and just as true as anything else. If we throw this passage out, we are no longer disciples, we have assumed the role of being the Lord. That's a scary thought!

Jesus is the Lord in all things, including our marriage. Putting God first, includes our marriages. Young people need to be taught the truth. Old people need to follow the truth.

Roger Shouse

