

"Do Not Leave"

1 Cor 7:10-24,39-40

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

In today's study, I wish to speak about divorce and although this is a difficult and personal subject for so many of us, please hear me out.

From a pastoral perspective, it is unlike a lot of other issues one faces because it is a culmination of an elongated journey. Unlike other sins, the divorce process itself is protracted over a period of months. Even though one might "get a divorce," the divorce itself extends over a period of days, weeks, months, and years. The divorce itself is a consequence not a cause, it is a fruit not a root.

In light of this idea let us consider the passage before us in 1 Corinthians 7:10-24, 39-40.

I. Do not leave your spouse (vv. 10, 11b)

What Paul is about to say concerning marriage has already been stated by the Lord in Matthew 5:27-32 and 19:3-12.

MacArthur notes how, "Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed. Where divorce is permitted, remarriage is permitted. It is clearly forbidden in the case in verse 11, but here and in other texts dealing with divorce because of adultery [or desertion] it is not." (*1 Corinthians*, 167).

As long as there is a possibility of reconciliation, one should not remarry. However, once that possibility has been exhausted, than remarriage is permissible.

Before I go any further let me qualify the study by saying, just because the Bible permits divorce does not necessitate that it happens. Just because you can does not mean you should.

II. If you do leave, remain single for the purpose of future reconciliation (v. 11a)

Paul appears to make a distinction between verses 10 and 11 and 12 through 16. It would appear that in verses 10 and 11 Paul speaks of two believers. In verses 12 through 16 Paul is addressing a mixed marriage.

- A. If two believers divorce for reasons other than defilement and/or desertion, remain single and seek reconciliation (v. 11a)
- B. If the unbelieving leaves, you are not under bondage (v. 15)

The word bondage means to be enslaved. When an unbeliever abandons the marriage covenant, the believer is no longer obligated. They are freed from the covenant.

- C. If the spouse dies, you are free to remarry (v. 39)

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Here the spouse can be either an unbeliever or a believer. This same idea is stressed in Romans 7:1-3.

III. If married to an unbeliever, stay with them (vv. 12-16)

A. For the sake of their redemption (vv. 14, 16)

This is the idea behind 1 Peter 3:1-2.

B. For the sake of their children (v. 14)

There is a redemptive aspect to the marriage covenant that is greater than being in a broken home.

IV. You are exactly where God wants you to be (vv. 17-24)

A. What is meant by "called?"

B. In any situation, God is enough (v. 22-24)

1. **First**, we affirm the event as sinful, but in so doing we must grow past the divorce (Gen 50:20).
2. **Second**, divorce, like all failure, is never final. From the broken soil of the event is often birthed new life (Job 1:21).
3. **Third**, God is in control . . . even of this tragedy. God did not absent Himself from their life. He has not abandoned the divorcee (Rom 8:28-32).
4. **Fourth**, God is going to show Himself mighty. His grace is going to prove sufficient (2 Cor 12:9).

It is my desire that in hating all sin, we do not become isolated from sinners. It is my passion that in hating all sin, we do not cease supporting our brothers and sisters in Christ who are going through this dark and lonely valley. May WBC be noted as a place where grace reigns.