

GOD AND DIVORCE

The same God who says that He hates divorce, also knows the pain of having His bride commit adultery, and this resulting in divorce (Jer. 3:8). It is also the same God that gave Israel laws regarding divorce (Deut. 24). So God is not out of touch with the reality of a sin contaminated world gone mad. But neither does He lower His standards. Marriage is good, and can be the nearest thing to heaven-on-earth when a couple puts into practice the principles of God's Word (eg. Eph. 5:21-33). A thorough examination of this statement about Christ's teaching on divorce will reveal that "fornication" related to the passage (Deut. 22:13-21).

9. What are some of the causes of marital breakdown?
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AVOIDING DIVORCE

Jesus has sternly warned about becoming involved with another person other than your spouse. "Involvement" is usually a gradual thing. It begins with innocent time spent alone with a person. Adultery doesn't just happen. It is the result of gradual compromise.

10. What kind of initially innocent situations should be avoided by two people of the opposite sex who aren't married? (Note the KJV 1Thess. 5:22; and 2Tim. 2:22)
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Some simple tips on strengthening a marriage are -

1. Spend _____ together.
2. _____ to each other.
3. Affirm your _____ for each other.
4. _____ to God together, and for each other.

Amen.

LIVING DIFFERENTLY

Part One

This study series on the Beatitudes is designed to show us how Christ expects us to live. Nicky Gumble has written on the Beatitudes in his book "Challenging Lifestyles". He refers to them as the most challenging pursuit any person can engage in. He makes mention of the incredibly high standard that they set. As we study these, let's remind ourselves that we can not possibly attain to these standards without God's help (Gal. 2:20).

AVOIDING IMMORALITY

Read Matthew 5:27-32

We are all created by God to be in relationships with others. When God created Adam, He said it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). There is an ache in every human heart whenever we are subjected to periods of loneliness. This is because it is not natural. God wants to bless our relationships with others. He has consequently designed that all our relationships are governed by healthy parameters. In this way mankind can enjoy relationships with each other that can reflect the love of God.

But there is one type of relationship that God has designed to be very special. It is so special that it carries with it tremendous privileges. And as with any privilege, there are also certain responsibilities. Yet the fruit of sin upon relationships is the destruction of healthy relationships.

In the report on Suicide Prevention to the Victorian Premier (1997), sexual abuse, and dysfunctional family relationships are noted as among the highest reasons for suicide in Australia. Sin has wrought havoc on how God has intended intimate relationships to be made healthy, and Jesus had something to say about that!

THE ESSENCE OF ADULTERY

The marriage relationship is the highest relationship that two people can enter into. It was designed by God. And, just as man was created in the image of God, so marriage reflects the unity that the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) enjoys.

1. What was God's original intention for those who were married? (Gen. 2:21-24; Matt. 19:3-6)

It is highly debatable whether God has a perfect partner destined for each of us. But there is no real debate at all, that when we marry, we have been joined to the person that God intends for us to be with *until death do we part*. Some Christians have got married, become dissatisfied with their partner and reasoned that perhaps they were not *meant* to marry that person in the first place. With this thinking they have justified themselves for wanting a divorce, or even committing adultery.

2. Is adultery ever acceptable? (note Ex. 20:14)

What Jesus Had To Say...

3. How did Jesus lift the stakes in the way adultery was defined? (Matthew 5:28)

The New Century Version renders that verse as -

But I tell you that if anyone looks at a woman and wants to sin sexually with her, in his mind he has already done that sin with the woman.

The Greek word translated as "look" means *to long for, to set the heart upon*. It is a looking that has developed into fantasizing.

4. What are we told to dwell on in our minds? (Phil. 4:8)

The mind is very powerful thing. Some estimate that we only ever use 10% of its capacity. And what a dangerous 10% that can be! What we look

upon, affects the way we think. What we think about affects the way we act. On the one hand TV & Movie executives tell us that violent and immoral TV show or movie scenes don't affect the behaviour of anyone. And on the other hand they sell advertising for millions of dollars to companies who know that what people look at does affect the way they think and the way they behave!

5. What did Jesus say would be the consequence of our bodies being used for immorality? (Mat. 5:29)

6. What warning does the Book of Revelation give us about the consequences of immorality? (Rev. 21:8)

7. What does Hebrews 13:4 tell us about how God feels about marriage?

8. How does God feel about divorce? (Malachi 2:16?)

