

“Difficult Marriages and Divorce?” 1 Corinthians 7:10–15

// *Cutting Through the Noise* #7

1 Corinthians 7, if you have your Bibles...¹

We are back in our series through 1 Cor called “Cutting Through the Noise,” and I’ll start with some pastoral confession time: I came *THIS CLOSE* to skipping this passage. It’s about marriage and divorce, which is always relevant, of course... BUT, we’ve had a quite a run of sermons recently, haven’t we -- working back over the last 6 weeks, we talked about church discipline, then sex, then singleness, then we took a break and talked about MONEY for 3 weeks--and then I’m supposed to welcome you back to our study of 1 Cor with some talk about *divorce*. This would be like chapter 1 in the book, “How to drive people away from your church.” People are like, “We’re ready for some feel good messages about Christmas, or ‘God’s good promises for dog owners’ or something like that.

So, my thought was, genuinely, “Let’s just pretend this passage isn’t there and skip on forward to 1 Cor 8-9.” They won’t notice. But in the end, y’all, I just couldn’t. God put this in there for a reason; somebody out there needs to hear it; like I’ve told you, I don’t choose what the Holy Spirit includes in his Scriptures; God stocks the pantry, I just prepare the meal.

But the last few weeks have been challenging, and I want to acknowledge that, and have taken some toughness to get through, **BUT YOU’RE STILL HERE!** and I appreciate it: Let’s pray for that toughness of spirit again this morning.

Ya know a few seasons ago the Georgia Bulldogs were not doing well at all, and the story goes that Mark Richt, their legendary and colorful coach (who actually will be leading a parenting seminar for us here tonight, info on the website) got really frustrated with the guys and got them all in a room and started to just dress them down. Boys, if you wanna win, you gotta get TOUGH. Tough. You gotta press through pain and discomfort. You gotta play when you’re tired. And to make his point he went over and pulled out this little pail, brought it to the middle of the room, reached down and pulled up a baby alligator out it. He said, “Let me show how tough you’re going to have to get.” He unzipped his pants, lowered his shorts in the back, turned around and let that alligator just bite a big chunk into his rear end. And the alligator’s hanging off his rear end, like this, and he’s walking around looking at his players. And he’s going, “This is how tough you’ve got to get. This tough! Are you ready for this?” And then he poked the alligator in the eyes and the alligator let go, and he picked up the alligator up, and he said, “Okay, who wants to be next?” Some big, slow-witted lineman in the back raised his hand and said, “Uh, I will, coach, but only if when it’s time to let go, you’ve got to promise not to poke me in the eyes.”

Toughness is what we’ve needed. **Maybe not that kind, but toughness nonetheless. VAMP** But I also want you to come with brokenness and faith and humility. Divorce has affected a lot of people in this church. Some of you have gone through it; many of you watched your parents go through it--or your kids; some of you had a close friend go through it; some of you are going through it right now.

I want you to know that I don’t come to you judgmentally today. I know that for many of you, your divorce was one of the most painful times in your life, and something *you would have avoided* if you could have.

¹ Works Consulted: Andy Stanley’s, “Conflict in the Family;” Tim Keller, “Marriage, Divorce, & Singleness,” Genesis 2; Matthew 19:3-12; John Mark Comer, “Divorce,”

Mark 10; John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*; D.A. Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary.

Let's acknowledge: Some Christians talk about divorce like it is THE unforgivable sin. As if it is the one thing you can't ever really come back from. The scarlet D you carry with you for the rest of your life. **But that's a lie.** I'm going to show you that today.

And while there may be a few of us who haven't had divorce in our immediate families, all of us have experienced brokenness in our families. For many of us, the worst pain we've ever experienced has come at the hand of someone in our family.

So, let's look with humility, and courage, and gospel hope, with what God has for us today--it's not just about divorce, it's about marriage, and conflict, and how to care for people who have been through a divorce:

PRAYER

1 Co7:10 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): (What does that phrase mean? "This is not me talking right now, but the Lord." You're like, "Didn't Paul write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, making everything he said 'from the Lord'?" Yes, but all that Paul is trying to indicate here is that he is referring to something Jesus himself said. Jesus had taught pretty clearly on divorce--it's recorded in Matthew 19, which we'll actually get to in a minute. But there, in Matthew 19, Jesus says, "the wife should not separate from her husband." The Greek word for "separate" is *chorizo*, which was the vernacular in that day for "divorce." **11** (but if she does (get divorced), she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. Pretty straightforward, right? But then Paul throws in a wrinkle: [13] If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

- **Here was the situation:** The Corinthian church was filled with new believers, and some of their spouses **didn't understand** their new faith; their homes felt like spiritual battlegrounds; their spouses **mocked them and antagonized** them; and so, **not surprisingly,**

some of them thought, "This would just be **easier if I wasn't married** to spiritual deadweight. *Surely God does not want me to be in a home where I get no spiritual support, where he or she is always dragging me down. Think about how much easier this would be if I was with someone who encouraged me and built me up spiritually. So, for spiritual reasons, God probably wants me to get divorced.*"

- And Paul says, "**No, even if you think it is better for you spiritually to be separated from your spouse, you should stay with them,** for two reasons:
 - **First, Marriage is a covenant union** that God established, whereby you promise loyalty and union to someone else until death do you part. When Paul in vs. 10 points back to what Jesus taught on divorce in Matthew 19, that was Jesus' main point. God created it, at the beginning, to be a picture of his love for us and it was to be a permanent union, dissolvable only by death. We'll look at that more in depth in a moment.
 - **But the second reason you should stay married in that situation, Paul explains in vs. 14,** is that God in his sovereignty has put you in your unbelieving spouse's life for a reason: **14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.
 - **Now, that wording can be confusing**—how does my being married to an unbeliever make THEM holy? That's not how holiness works. Holiness by osmosis.
 - **Paul is using a Jewish metaphor, so to speak.** You see, "holy" in its purest context, means "set apart." Paul is saying that the fact that you are in the house means that your unbelieving spouse and your kids, if you have them, have been "set apart" for a special opportunity to hear the gospel and see it lived out up close. Your very presence increases their exposure to the gospel, and if you leave, you short-circuit that.

- A guy once told me that the only Christian in his family was the grandmother—not the grandfathers, aunts, uncles, or anybody. And she faithfully stayed in an environment where she was lonely, sometimes ridiculed. And one by one they started to get saved. Now all the grandchildren are believers. How many of you who are saved here this morning had a similar situation--one person in your house followed Jesus--a mom, a grandma, an aunt, a dad... somebody, and because of that one person you are now a Christian.
- Maybe that's your role, and maybe it's not really fulfilling for you. But Paul says, "God has a purpose for you there. Find your happiness in doing the will of God and in being a vessel of his purposes, even if it's not the greatest situation in marriage."

Now, watch this: **1 Co7:15** But if the unbelieving partner separates (remember, separate/chorizo is the word for 'divorce'), let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not bound. (In context, "not bound" means that you are no longer restrained by the marriage covenant, and thus free to remarry).²

So, here we have an exception to Jesus' "don't get divorced" teaching. And what's Paul's rationale for why this is ok? Look at the next phrase, this is really important: **Because God has called you to peace.** If an unbeliever in the marriage says, "I can't take this," and divorces you, you don't have to pursue them for the rest of your life, even though you once said before God, "till death do us part." Why? **Because God has called us to peace.** They have walked away from the covenant. The covenant is dead. God didn't intend it that way, but that's what it is now, and thus, you are "no longer bound."

So Paul gives an exception to Jesus' "never get divorced" teaching. So here's the question: Are there other 'exceptions'? Or, is the only

justifiable reason for divorce abandonment by an unbelieving spouse?

Well, let's look. Let's go back to Matthew 19, the passage that Paul is basing his teaching on, and see what Jesus says. **I'm going to argue that Paul felt the freedom to make the exception he made because of the rationale Jesus used in Matthew 19.** Leave your finger in **1 Cor 7** and flip back to Matthew 19:

Matthew 19:3-9 ESV

[3] And Pharisees came up to him and **tested** him by asking (first, notice the context: This was not an honest pastoral question, but a theological trap. They were attempting to set him up with a difficult question so that no matter how he answers, he's gonna be in trouble with somebody. "Jesus, do you think that love for our neighbor requires us to get the vaccine?" That's the kind of question they'd be asking Jesus today. "Jesus...), "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for (just) any cause?" [4] **He answered,** "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [6] **So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."** (So, Jesus' answer is 'No, it's not ok for a man to divorce his wife for "just any cause."' Jesus then quotes from Genesis 2, where God establishes marriage, and he points out that marriage was designed by God to be a lifelong covenant, a union lasting until death. No man or woman should ever dare separate themselves from a union that God established. In marriage, he has made you one entity, one new body, dissolvable only by death)

[7] They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?"

- They are feeling good. They are like "Ah-ha." Got you. You see, Moses had said in **Deut 24:1** "If a man takes a wife and marries

² J. MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*, 167.

her, if he finds some indecency in her....” then he could divorce her. So they are like, “If you are saying we shouldn’t get divorced, you are contradicting Moses. So, because you are contradicting the Bible, we are forced to conclude that you are a false teacher.

- (For the record, you should never get in a battle of wits with Jesus. Particularly over Bible facts. But, they had to learn the hard way.)

[8] He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives,³ but from the beginning it was not so.

- Jewish scholars had long taught a difference between a command and a concession: A command is something that God wants all people everywhere to do; a concession was something God allowed because of man’s fallen condition, in order to keep peace in a society filled with people at various levels of spiritual maturity. This allowance for divorce, Jesus said, was not a command; it was a concession due to our fallen state.
- And the **Pharisees actually knew** that; that was a well-known distinction in the Jewish law.

Which brings us to the second part of their trap, which concerns what Moses meant by **‘something indecent’**? **Moses had said**, “*When a man takes a wife and marries her, if he finds some indecency* (In Hebrew, *erwat dabar*, ‘something indecent’) *in her*,” he could divorce her. The question was, “What **qualifies as *erwat dabar***?” That was an ambiguous phrase. There were two dominant schools of thought.

- **There was the school of Rabbi Shammai**: He said that indecent meant only ‘*sexual indecency*,’ meaning that Moses was saying that only if a man discovered his wife had been sexually unfaithful could he divorce her. This was the **conservative position**. You can only divorce for sexual immorality.

³ BTW, those ancient cultures were very male-dominated, and it was usually only men who would initiate the divorce. So Jesus is directing his teaching at men, since most of the divorces would have been initiated by them. But these things would apply equally to women.

- On the other side you had **Rabbi Hillel** (R. Hillel was more progressive; he studied at Berkeley, wore Birkenstocks, refused to use plastic straws--that kind of guy). Rabbi Hillel said “**indecent**” meant *anything* you didn’t like about her. Maybe she has **indecent behavior; or indecent cooking skills, or indecent morning breath**. I’m actually **not joking** about this. We have record of him saying, ‘If she consistently burns the bread, *erwat dabar*, you may divorce her.’” Hillel said, “If you fall out of love with her, that’s *erwat dabar*—if *anything* about her *feels* ‘indecent’ to you, divorce her.”⁴
- And here’s the thing: **The majority of the Jewish world** in Jesus’ day was on the side of Rabbi Hillel—the progressive one. So the Pharisees are trying to get Jesus on record taking the hardline position so that he’d fall out of favor with the people.
- Plus, and here was the genius of their trap: **John the Baptist had been** executed for speaking out against casual divorce and remarriage. He’d criticized King Herod for leaving his wife and taking another, and Herod beheaded him for it. So, the Pharisees probably thought, “*Look, if we can get Jesus to publicly take positions similar to John the Baptist, maybe we can get him killed, too.*”⁵

So, what is Jesus’ answer? [9] And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Jesus comes down pretty decidedly on the side of the conservative position. In fact, he strengthens it. Not only is it wrong to divorce someone because you just want to be out of the marriage, if you get remarried, God actually considers your new marriage adulterous, at least at the beginning, since in his eyes you are still married to that first person.

⁴ D.A. Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 411.

⁵ I was helped in the development of the flow of thought here by John Mark Comer, “Divorce,” Mark 10:1–12

Jesus bases this on Genesis 2. Marriage, he says, was designed by God to be a relationship in which **two lives** fuse into one. As I've explained, in marriage your names become one, finances become one; your bodies become one flesh in sex; your futures and your families become one. Marriage demonstrates the unconditional love of God: I am binding myself to you no matter how much you disappoint me or let me down.

In fact, Paul would later explain that marriage is a unity that **demonstrates the Trinity itself**. Two distinct persons with one essence.

That kind of unity cannot just be walked away from. Marriage, Jesus says, was never designed by God to be a **contract** where you have a buy-out option. It's a **fusion of their life into your life** that makes a **new single one-flesh entity**.

So, Jesus says, vs [6] **What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.**" No comma. No dash. No asterisk. No fine print. No recommended reading. Period. End of Sentence.

Jesus had a totally different approach to marriage than most people in their cultures did and our culture does. Most people approach marriage as if it were a **consumer** relationship.

- **A consumer** relationship is one where you figure out what you need and who best can meet that need. And there is **nothing wrong with consumer** relationships: I have a consumer relationship with my grocery store—I go because it is convenient to my house; it has fairly good prices, it's got a really good sandwich Deli and a coffee shop. And they keep the Ghiradelli chocolates right up there at the front so I can grab them on my way out. However, **if I find one that is more convenient** or cheaper, I'll go there. That is a consumer relationship, and there's nothing wrong with that. **But I can't have that kind of relationship** with my kids. I don't go to one of them and say, "You

know, Adon, this is just not working out. It's not you, bud, it's me. I actually have been hanging out with the neighbor's kids and I'm happier with them now." **No parent in here would do that because you know your relationship with your kids is not a consumer relationship.** That's a covenant relationship. *"I'm not bound to you because of what you do for me; I'm bound to you because we're family now."*

- **So, which** kind of relationship is marriage more like? You say, "covenant," but if you get divorced because it is just not working, or because your desires have changed, or they annoy you or they are just not doing it for you anymore, then you see it like a consumer relationship.

According to Jesus marriage is a covenant in effect until death do you part.

So, if that's the case, is it ever ok to divorce?

- *Jesus says you can do it in the case of adultery. Paul expands that to say desertion by an unbeliever. **Why would those be exceptions?***
- The logic of this is very important. **Because both adultery and desertion kill the covenant.**
 - **When your spouse unites themselves to someone else sexually**, they have destroyed the one-flesh covenant with you. So you are no longer bound and free to remarry. You don't have to do that, but it's an option.
 - And, **if your spouse leaves you and divorces you**, they have killed the covenant and you are free to remarry. In both cases, God has called you to peace.

Perhaps you ask, "Well, what if there was no adultery, and technically no "divorce by an unbeliever"-- but one spouse is abusive; or maybe they are involved in some illegal activity they refuse to stop that is putting our family at risk."

Well, first you should definitely get yourself out of the situation immediately. If that's you today, come talk to us. We'll help. Or if

you're not feeling safe, reach out to the **Domestic Violence support hotline**: Write this number down: **800.799.SAFE**.

As far as whether divorce is an option, I would argue that the logic of Paul's and Jesus' exceptions also allow for divorce when a spouse is doing something that makes them unable to be lived with, putting you or the kids in danger. In the same way that adultery or abandonment have killed the covenant, living in an abusive way does too. By the logic of 1 Cor 7:15, you are no longer bound.

- (This doesn't mean, btw, they've gotten annoying, or "they've changed," or "they are just not doing it for me," or "we argue a lot," but that they have killed the covenant by being unsafe to live with.)
- You **need to do this under close advisement** of a Christian counselor and with the support of the pastors at your campus.
- And a **period of separation may be in order**, perhaps even a long one, to give your spouse space to repent.
- And, can I say, you should bring in those pastors and counselors early. Often, a divorcing spouse will spend a year or more coming to a decision, largely on their own, and then want their church to affirm that decision within a single conversation with their pastor. That puts us in a dilemma. We want to care for you, and we want to understand what you are going through. You've spent a year thinking through this. We want to honor that and we want to shepherd you well. It is hard to be pastorally responsible in coming alongside you in a decision as weighty as divorce in a single conversation.. So, please, bring us in early.

But the big point I want you to get is this: from the beginning, God established marriage as a covenant, not a consumer relationship: TWO BECOME ONE. Divorce is as radical as AMPUTATING an arm of a leg. (There are times when amputation is necessary, but any doctor would be run out of the practice if he was constantly and quickly

saying, "Well, let's just amputate it." "Hang nail? Amputate!" "Sprained ankle. Ugly freckles. Varicose veins? Just cut it off at the knees!" "Oh, tattoo removal? Yes, we could do that, but have you considered amputation?" Yes, amputation is sometimes required, but it is as radical and **the last thing** that you do after you have tried literally EVERYTHING else!⁶

So, using the time I have left, let me deal with three practical questions: 1. How do I stay in a difficult marriage? 2. If I'm divorced, should I get remarried? 3. If I am divorced and remarried, how does God see me?

1. How do I stay in a difficult marriage?

A. First of all, reject the right person myth.

- I said this a few weeks ago when we were looking at singleness, but let me **revisit it here**, because we're getting into Hallmark movie season: The right person myth says ***that there is a right person out there for you, and a good marriage is determined by finding that person, and if you don't find that person, you'll never be happy; and that if you're unhappy in marriage now, it's because you didn't get the right person. At first you thought they were it, but now you are a little older and wiser and see your mistake, so if you could get out of this relationship with them and into one with the 'right' person, you'd be happy.***
- **But the truth I told you a few weeks ago is that you always marry the wrong person.**
 - First, **because you are a sinner** and they are a sinner, that means they are going to disappoint and fail you.
 - **Second, you change over time**, so, like I said a few weeks ago, counselors say that by the time you make it to 70, you've probably been married to about 5 people because they change and you change.
 - **Finally, you always marry the "wrong" person**, so to speak, because *God's purpose in marriage was not restoring the*

⁶ Tim Keller, "Marriage, Divorce, & Singleness," Genesis 2; Matthew 19:3-12

missing part of your soul in another person. That missing piece in you is found in him. The arms you searched for in romance were actually his arms. God's main purpose in marriage is not making you happy in a perfect person, his main purpose in marriage is to teach you to become more like him by faithfully loving and forbearing with an annoying sinner like he loves and forbears with you. And he does that by having you marry an imperfect person.⁷

- **The best you can hope for in marriage, one counselor says, is "less of a bad match" for you, since everyone ends up being a bad match in some way.**
- To be very clear: *I'm not saying you can't genuinely be in love with your spouse (I so love Veronica!); just don't look to marriage for something it was never designed to give you!* Marrying someone new won't fix your emptiness. It won't cure your problems. Like I told you a few weeks ago, lonely, insecure, unhappy single people...
- So, reject that myth...

B. Do it for Jesus

- The **covenant you made** in marriage was first and foremost to him. Even if you weren't a Christian when you got married, marriage was God's creation and you did it in his name.
- **I have a friend who went through a difficult chapter in his marriage** and in one counseling session she told him, "I'm here because of Jesus, not you." Eventually they repaired their relationship and have a wonderfully close and loving marriage today, but sometimes it is simply your faith in Jesus that keeps you going.
- *You may not feel, in the moment, that that person standing in front of you is worthy of your forgiveness or your continued faithfulness, but Jesus is.* Picture Jesus behind your spouse, and respond not so much to *them* but to *him*.

⁷ I love Gary Thomas here: God's main purpose in marriage is not to make you 'happy' by uniting with a perfect person, but to make you holy by teaching you to love like him.

- **You see, we usually get divorced not because we fall out of love with our spouse, but because we fall out of worship of Jesus.**
- *You may not feel, in the moment, that that person standing in front of you is worthy of forgiveness, or your continued faithfulness, but Jesus ALWAYS is.*

C. Soak yourself in God's grace

- What precedes Jesus' teaching on marriage in Matt 19 is his teaching on forgiveness
- Jesus tells a story about a man who has been man forgiven 10K talents; You are the person who owes 10K; Nothing anyone has done that comes close to what you've done. **Realizing that is what changes your heart.**
- Did you see in Matthew 19, when Jesus quotes Moses' concession on divorce, WHY Moses said God did it? **"Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."**
 - Ultimately it is our hardened hearts that kill a marriage. It is not the fights, the frustrations, the lack of fulfillment, or whatever. It is a hardened heart. Jesus can soften that heart through the gospel and his Holy Spirit. So, lean into that.⁸

Finally, the Apostle Paul adds in 1 Cor 7,

D. You Might Do it for others

- Paul urges that spouse, stuck in an unfulfilling marriage to an unbeliever, to lift their eyes beyond themselves to the positive effect that remaining in the marriage will have on others, particularly their kids.
- **You probably don't need me to cite the stats about the devastation divorce has on kids.**
- **Children of divorce are four times** more likely to have social problems. **Two times** more likely to drop out of school. Three

⁸ John Mark Comer, "Divorce," Mark 10.

times more likely to need psychological help; five times more likely to be unable to keep a job.⁹

- **One secular marriage author** I was reading said, *“Absolutely, you should stay married just for your kids.”*
- (BTW, these stats wouldn’t apply to marriages where there is abuse; children fare better in safe environments, even if that means divorce. I’m talking about the disadvantages to the children just because you “fall out of love” or some other Westernized love ideal like that.)
- **The other thing we have to consider, as believers, is what a divorce communicates to our kids (and our community) about the love of God.** When we walk away from a marriage because we are unhappy, **we tell them that God’s love is conditional**; that **when we annoy him or disappoint him** or make him unhappy, he leaves us. The **world desperately needs to know** the patient, steadfast, never-giving up love of God, and our marriages are supposed to demonstrate that!
- I don’t mean to make this devastating: **the healing power of God’s grace is amazing.** I know divorced people in this church that are experiencing God’s incredible sustaining, renewing grace after it. The gospel is that God can take our mistakes and rewrites them with beauty. Divorce doesn’t mean the best part of your life is over. **I’ll get to that more at the end.**
- **But the fact that God’s grace is amazing shouldn’t cause us to take lightly the damaging power of sin**, and that’s what I’m trying to point out.

E. Get some counseling

- E.g. Me and Veronica have at several points...
- G4: We have DivorceCare, Men's Purity groups, Women's Purity, Support for Betrayal groups; Addiction groups. You can find all the counseling options our church offers at www.summitchurch.com/counseling

⁹ <http://www.children-and-divorce.com/children-divorce-statistics.html>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article->

2. Should I get remarried?

- ~~**When a divorce is legitimate, remarriage is an option.**~~ When Paul says in 1 Cor 7, “You are no longer ‘bound,’” he means not only that divorce is ok but that you are free to remarry.
- ~~But just because you **can** get remarried doesn’t mean you **should**.~~
- ~~After all, remember, Paul says in 1 Cor 7 Paul that **singleness can be a gift**. You don’t need marriage to be happy. It may be better for you and your kids for you to stay single, andr God may have purposes for you in a time of singleness. Don’t think automatically that marriage is just what you have to do. Paul says you will likely be more useful to the Kingdom of God if you stay single.~~
- ~~But, if after you have been divorced, you think remarriage is a gift God is bringing back to you... here are some questions:~~
 - ~~**First, Have I given God time to restore my previous marriage?**~~
 - ~~It amazes me the speed people move through this. They seem not to realize how much is at stake! Again, it’s like amputation; and it’s devastating for a lot of people involved, not just you.~~
 - ~~**Even if you are separated or divorced**, you ought to ask God to heal your previous marriage, and give him time to do it. **BTW, nothing says if your spouse committed adultery** that the marriage HAS to be over, and that God can’t enable you to forgive. **Some of the best marriages** I know today had that hurt in their past. Even in adultery, God enabled the hurt spouse to show grace and their marriage today is stronger for it!~~
 - ~~I’m telling you, the power of God’s grace is amazing.~~
 - ~~Take time: Many say 1 full year after the divorce is final~~
 - ~~**Second, have I given God time to heal me?**~~
 - ~~Get Counseling—Again, G4~~

Final question:

2411830/What-divorce-really-does-children--shattering-words-if-youre-divorced-thinking-testimony-shake-core.html

3. If I am divorced and remarried, how does God see me?

I'll say what I said at the beginning: **Divorce is not the unforgivable sin.** Look at: **Jeremiah 3:8.** God says, "For all her adulteries, I gave faithless Israel a certificate of divorce." God has the audacity to call himself a divorced person! If I were to ask all divorced people to stand up, and God where here, he'd stand up.

Now, of course, there was no sin on his side of the divorce, and maybe there was on yours. But in the cross and resurrection, Jesus puts away the sin done by you and he overturns the sin done to you.

- The cross: "He bore our sins in his own body on the cross," and when we believe he died for us, God transfers our sin to Jesus. 1 John 1:9
- The resurrection is God overturning the curse of death and destruction brought on by our sin and infusing the power of new life into the dead tomb of a broken heart. **The empty tomb is the answer for the empty soul ravaged by divorce.**
- **And I feel a special word for some people out there going through real maritable trouble**--God is going to do something amazing, and he's if you will trust in him and give him time, he's going to do something amazing in your marriage that makes it far stronger and more beautiful than anything you've ever imagined. Better than when you were newlyweds. I'm not saying that's for everyone, but it's for someone.

Maybe you're sitting here realizing you made terrible mistakes in that process; maybe you even committed terrible sins. You **can't change that now**, but the good news of the gospel is that those **mistakes don't mean God is done** with you or that he can't touch even that part of your life with blessing.

Let me show you something awesome: In Matthew's recording of Jesus' genealogy, Matthew 1 (Matt 1 is Jesus' 23 and Me study), he shows us that a number of the relationships in Jesus' ancestry were compromised. Sexual sins. Broken marriages. One of Jesus' great grandmothers was a former prostitute. And all of these things were terrible, painful, and I'm not trying to make light of them. Yet out of all that mess, God brought Jesus. What's the point of that?

One of those relationships Matthew points to as part of Jesus' ancestry is David and Bathsheba. Think about the brokenness and tragedy surrounding that relationship! David sleeps with Bathsheba then has her husband killed. You don't get more severe marital brokenness than that! Yet, after David repented, God not only forgave him, God brought forth from David and Bathsheba Solomon, and from Solomon ultimately would come the Messiah, Jesus.

- I agree with Tim Keller: "What does that mean other than God is trying to say to all of us, 'I love redeeming the worst situations. I love redeeming the hardest cases. Go ahead, try me.'"¹⁰
- God can bring beauty and redemption even out of our biggest mistakes, if we trust it to him.

You say, "**Well, wait J.D. but my spouse hurt me. Bad. And they took from me some things I can never get back. It's not fair they don't have to pay** for their sin or you try to tie it all up with a Bible bow! They seem to have gotten off scot-free and it's hard for me to handle that...is there no justice?" There is and I'm not trying to be lighthearted about your pain or the injustice that happened to you.

I always think about Uriah in this situation--Uriah was Bathsheba's husband. Honorable and loyal, but then betrayed by David and murdered. Imagine, after all this has gone done, Uriah has been murdered, from heaven he's watching things unfold on earth. And

¹⁰ Tim Keller, "Marriage, Divorce, & Singleness," Genesis 2; Matthew 19:3-12

he's like, "God, wait... no, you are blessing David and Bathsheba with Solomon? And he gets to be an ancestor of JESUS? David slept with my wife and murdered me!"

I imagine God gave Uriah a vision of a mysterious Man hanging on a cross. And he says to Uriah, "That man on the cross is paying for David's sin against you. And your sin against me, too." "Who is that suffering One on the cross, Lord? Who is it that will pay for sin?" And God says, "That's Jesus, not just David's son, but MINE. He's the one who suffers for David's sin. And yours. And after he dies for sin, I'm going to bring his dead body back to life to show that I can overturn every cursed thing for good. Even this.

Write this down: ***In the cross, we find forgiveness for the sins done by us and healing for the ones done to us.***

In this part of our lives, as with all others, we can say: *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved an unfaithful wretch LIKE ME; I once was lost, but now I'm found, I was blind but now I see.*

The Lord has promised good to me; his word my hope secures! He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures!

Communion