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The Drama of Marriage - Divorce & Remarriage, Q & A Selected Passages

PowerPoint Presentation: None

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SermonAudio blurb:

1. What constitutes a marriage?
 - a. This is a lot more complex than it first appears.
 - b. The question needs to be posed in this way: “Who determines if a person is truly married?”
 - i. Our nation has now said that same sex marriage is, in fact, marriage. Are they actually married?
 - ii. At the core of this is the deeper question, from whom does the authority to be considered married come? And the answer I believe is God.
 - iii. Now others will say that it is the state and that is where we must look. Whatever the State determines is marriage, is in fact, marriage.
 - iv. But I would argue that the State is still subservient to God and that just because the State says “This is marriage” means nothing if it contradicts God’s declaration.
 - v. At the same time, you should be very wary of a person who says that they are married in God’s eyes although they are not married in the eyes of the State.
 - vi. In many ways we find ourselves facing an uncomfortable place of straddling two rapidly opposing positions.
 - (1) Example, if a man was married to another man and then came to Christ he must stop in every way that relationship. That means now that he would have to divorce. In the eyes of the Lord that never was a marriage but in the eyes of the state it is.
 - (2) At the same time if he then desired to marry a believing woman I would not hesitate to marry them since he was not actually married in the first place.
 - (3) In addition, Missio has changed its marriage policy and may have to do so even more so as our nation continues to move into

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immorality. Explain current and then the idea of not even making it a civil marriage anymore. And accepting possible consequences for couples in tax issues.

- c. Here are the basics of marriage.
 - i. There is a ceremony.
 - ii. There is a covenant.
 - iii. There is a consummation.
- d. There are three main approaches taken.
 - i. Covenant Establishes Marriage.
 - (1) This simply says that there is a covenant between a man and woman with the intention to be husband and wife (not just buddies).
 - (2) There is no need for a consummation because the sexual act is a part of the ongoing marriage rather than making one “married.”
 - ii. Sexual Union Establishes Marriage.
 - (1) Example often used would be Leah and Jacob (Genesis 29:20-25).
 - (a) Notice however that it was not merely sexual.
 - (b) Laban brought her to Jacob, this a form of covenant making, when Jacob received her.
 - (2) An argument against this would be John 4:16-18.
 - (3) A practical challenge of this would be if a man sleeps with several women, is he married to them all? What if two people were very promiscuous do they both have multiple wives and husbands?
 - iii. Covenant and Sexual Union Establishes Marriage.
 - (1) I believe this is the best position to take, though both of the above positions actually have quite a bit to offer.
 - (2) With this idea we take both aspects and bring them together.
 - (3) It fits the idea of Genesis 2:24, of leaving and cleaving.
 - (a) That language is covenantal.
 - (b) But it is also sexual.

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- (4) It fits the idea of the Jewish idea of a betrothal stage where they were married, yet not fully.
 - (5) The challenge when you read the bible is that it is not always clear how all of this play out.
 - (a) One reason is that the bible is not trying to go through a full explanation whenever it speaks of a marriage.
 - (b) Second, each culture is different as to what is the covenant making process. For some it is a bride price, others it is a ring, others it could be a animal sacrifice.
 - iv. It must be between a man and a woman, that is clearly shown in the Genesis account and fully supported throughout the bible.
 - v. Also the pattern that is to be followed is Covenant first, then Consummation. (Discuss how this plays itself out in me marrying someone who got pregnant).
 - vi. So, a sub question is this, if Fred and Suzy marry, then they divorce and Fred marries Delores, is that second relationship really a marriage.
 - (1) The answer is yes.
 - (2) **John 4:18** for you have had **five** husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."
 - (3) Unless her husbands all were dead, then she was divorcing and remarrying several times. But all were still husbands.
2. (Question 1)What is the biblical response to physical abuse in a marriage relationship?
(Question 2) How would I advise to a wife who is being physically/sexually abused?
Along the same lines, if a husband is threatening to kill his wife, what is she to do?
These questions could also pertain to a husband's action towards his children (abuse and intent to murder), and what you would advise the wife
- a. Safety.
 - b. Counseling.
 - c. Accountability.
 - d. The State.
 - e. Great care needs to be made when using the term "abuse."
3. What kind of escapes from a sinful spouse are Biblically acceptable?

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- a. This is hard to say due to the wideness of what could be meant by “sinful spouse.”
 - b. First, both spouses are sinful! A lot!
 - c. Second, there is no divorce acceptable. But if one did divorce, they are nothing more than separated, the marriage, in God’s eyes is still intact and they must remain unmarried.
 - d. The question above would seem to answer the rest.
4. Common Law Marriages.
- a. Wisconsin is not a Common Law state.
 - b. But California is. If a couple has lived together (including sexually) for at least 6 years they are declared to be married.
 - c. This is a pain to deal with, but here is how I would state it.
 - i. They are married.
 - ii. They did it all wrongly but they are still married.
 - iii. The consummation came first, but the covenantal aspects are obvious because they have, in fact, shown to have had a covenant, even though it was not clearly defined.
 - iv. However, I would personally argue that they need to have a public declaration of those covenant promises so they can publically recognize the actual state of their relationship, that it is a marriage.
 - v. Obviously, being in Wisconsin, it is not an issue, they are instead in a sexual relationship, but not marriage.
5. Regarding Erasmus and the text in Matthew 19; how are we to understand this situation and how do we trust our bibles?
- a. Erasmus, a RCC scholar of the 1500's. It was a collation of Greek manuscripts so he had to consider line by line what each said.
 - b. It is likely that Erasmus, who only had a few Greek manuscripts and even then not the whole of the NT, took the exception clause of Matthew 5 and put it in Matthew 19 as there is ample evidence that it isn’t part of the original text. This is why this view on divorce and remarriage is often called the “Erasmian View.”
 - c. Recommend book. It is very basic but gives a good overview of the whole situation.
 - d. Textual criticism is a reality and each of you should be at least slightly aware of it.

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- e. The better you study it the better you will appreciate the translation you possess.
6. In Deuteronomy 24 it says that if a divorce occurs and the ex-wife remarries, then divorces again, the first husband can't remarry her because she is defiled and it is an abomination to God. Why?
- a. Understand "defile" here speaks of being ritually unclean. This is a small part of a much larger part of the Old Testament law code regarding being clean and unclean.
 - b. The bible does not give us a rationale behind why certain things, often food, were considered unclean. Though many suggestions are given the best is to understand that God declared certain things to be such as a way of making Israel a distinct/holy nation reflecting His holiness.
 - c. First understand that what is an abomination is not the woman, but the attempt to remarry her after first divorcing her and her remarrying.
 - d. Second, being unclean likely refers to the fact that she has now been with another husband and therefore was sexually involved. This would make her off limits to the first husband who chose to break the "one flesh" relationship and she then remarried.
7. Many questions centering around marriage and remarriage based off of Jesus' teachings.
- a. It is assumed that a woman normally would remarry in that day. You don't have single-women as a rule and an divorced woman would be looking to protect herself through marriage. This is why Jesus says that if you divorce your wife you cause her to commit adultery when she remarries. It would be a rare occurrence for her to not remarry.
 - b. There is a question of church discipline on a person who remarried after a divorce. The answer is no, we won't. The reason is that this is a subject that is hotly debated and though it is settled in my mind it doesn't mean it is settled by the church at large. Again I liken it to paedobaptism, which I believe is incredibly wrong and contrary to the bible.
 - c. Is a person able to return to their former spouse if they both have not remarried? And yes is the answer. There were many questions of this nature. The only exception would be if you are a Christian and your unbelieving spouse leaves. Later they want to be remarried, if I understand 1 Corinthians 7 correctly then you would not be under compulsion to remarry.
 - d. Scenario: I am married for the first time and my spouse is on their second marriage. Am I truly married? And the answer is yes. Jesus would say that adultery occurred by the remarried spouse at the time of marriage but that would

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- not make the marriage a fake one. They run parallel to one another though they don't fit well in our minds.
- e. Two people, not Christians, get married and divorce later. What is their status going forward? They are not Christians so I have little I can say with authority. If they came to Christ I would instruct them to remain in whatever condition they are at that time per 1 Corinthians 7.
 - f. If a man divorces and remarries and the first spouse is still alive is he a bigamist? No, because he divorced the first person. The only way to be a bigamist is to take a second spouse while keeping the first.
8. Why would God make any provisions in the bible regarding divorce if faithfulness to marriage is always to be sought?
- a. Because of sin.
 - b. He gives provisions for accidental death, injury, theft, rape, fornication, sicknesses, disease, inheritance and many, many other things. None should occur but because of sin all does. The law does not fix these things, merely legislates what happens if/when it does occur.
 - c. In 1 Kings 3:16ff two prostitutes come before Solomon for judgment. They both claim a baby to be theirs. The story is a well-known story. But prostitutes should not be present, but they are and justice was needed.
9. What place does continuity/discontinuity play into this subject?
- a. The Old Testament law does not apply to the Church. But the Old Testament law does reflect the mind and character of God. Therefore it should not be ignored either.
 - b. The gospels are still part of the Old Covenant and this is often forgotten. After Acts 2 do we see the New Covenant come about.
10. How do we interact with those who pursue divorce and remarriage both in and outside of our congregation.
- a. Hard to answer in black and white. If they are part of our congregation I always counsel that the aggrieved party seek reconciliation and if the sinning party refuses that they are to let them. But also that they need to remain in that condition. Usually it is at that time that this type of preaching series becomes very important to them.
 - b. In those situations we would likely be pursuing Church discipline for the one actively rebelling. We have not found a church in Kenosha which will honor when we discipline so that complicates matters as well.

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- c. If they both are being petty and deciding divorce is they easy way out then it is very likely both parties will be disciplined per Matthew 18.
 - d. How do we interact with those situation that are simply unclear? I would argue that grace and kindness should be preeminent. But also not giving approval if a situation is not as you understand the Scripture to teach on it. This can result in some awkward situations.
11. In Luke 16:18 it says “. . . divorce his wife and marries another” — what is the technical definition of the act of remarriage. Is it only a legal one or also a “spiritual” one.
- a. The bible does not make any distinction so we can’t either.
 - b. It is unwise to try to make a second marriage something less that a full or true marriage because the bible never says it isn’t. The sin of adultery has also occurred but that does not make the second or third marriage less that a true marriage.
12. What are the essential elements of a proper divorce leading to the dissolution of a marriage, if any?
- a. Context, a couple filed for legal divorce to gain certain state benefits for medical insurance, but remained publically faithful in their marriage. So, how much does the state determine a marriage?
 - b. This is so specific that I would need to privately speak to people involved.
 - c. The presenting concern is what is motivating a legal divorce? Is it because certain care is being denied to them? Is it the fear of losing their house because of medical costs? Why is the motivation.
 - d. I would be extremely hesitant to ever recommend this. Essentially both parties are not even protected by the law regarding married people. This is the difference of a concubine and a wife in the Old Testament. They were a “wife of a secondary level” and not afforded the same protections and privileges.
13. How does 2 Corinthians 5:17 come into play with all of this?
- a. Common to hear, everything is under the blood, therefore the old divorce is to be forgotten.
 - b. But that is misusing the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:17.
 - c. It is not talking about freedom from our responsibilities, rather it is a partaking of a new age and world, which brings a new position before God.
 - d. One point that should make this obvious. If you were to say, “I divorced before I was saved. But now I am saved and it is gone and forgotten, I have a clean slate.”

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Then would you say this? “I was married before I was saved. Now I am saved, so that marriage (which I am still in) is gone and forgotten?”

14. What would repentance look like in a divorce and remarriage?
 - a. First, willingly confessing it as sin when it comes up.
 - b. Second, making no justifications for it.
 - c. Third, fulfilling any and all responsibilities for the former spouse. This would mean, making certain the children and wife are cared for.
 - d. Fourth, if you are divorced, you willingly remain separate and single.
 - e. Fifth, you seek reconciliation with your spouse if it is possible (assuming both are still single).

15. How does our status as a remarried couple affect how we could participate in the ministries here at Missio?
 - a. It doesn't, in itself.
 - b. If your attitude was, “Forget that! This is stupid and I completely reject it!” And then you start creating problems and dissension, then it will become an issue, but it is based off of your attitude.
 - c. There is an issue related to Elder and Deacon. Explain. But also how you are reconsidering it.