

Unlawful Divorce

Matthew 5:31-32

Introduction – Jesus continues to give very practical examples of how, by living our lives in the blessedness of the Beatitudes, we are to display good works in stark contrast to the unbelieving world around us – even if the unbelieving world turns out to include much of the established church. True disciples do not let murder rest in their hearts. They do not let lust rule their thoughts. And they do not lightly destroy marriage covenants.

Lust and Divorce – The teachings of the Pharisees become clearer when we consider Matt 19:1-9. Remember from the last passage in the Sermon on the Mount, the Pharisees had taught that lustful thoughts were acceptable. But where does a heart full of lust eventually lead? Moses had given regulations to restrain divorce, and these so-called followers of Moses were using his teaching to make divorce as easy as filling out the paperwork.

Jesus on Marriage – (Matt 19:4-6) Marriage is not an institution that man made up for his own conveniences. It is an institution by God for His purposes, and because it is His purpose, it is a blessing for men and women in many ways. But it is God's institution and therefore it must be regulated by His laws. Polygamy and sodomy are not options for marriage in the created order. And since this sexual union, within the context of a covenantal oath, is created by God, man may not tear it apart.

Jesus on Divorce – (Matt 19:7-9) But that is not to say that under the law of God a marriage covenant cannot be dissolved. This was not commanded, but allowed since the fall. Covenantal death, however, cannot be determined by the whims of men. We must follow the law of God. This passage and Matt 5:31-32 teach that fornication is a lawful reason for allowing divorce. In 1 Cor 7:10-16, Paul reasons from this that desertion is an additional gross violation of the marriage covenant.

“Salt of the Earth/Light of the World” Marriages – Ephesians 5:22-33 teaches us that the mystery of the relationship of husband and wife is that it proclaims the gospel of Christ to His church. Do you reflect these kinds of good works in your marriage?

Poor in Spirit – Husbands, do you exercise true authority and responsibility in your home because you are a servant of Christ and therefore the chief-servant in your home? Or do you act like a tyrant, trying to hide the fact that you are a spiritual wimp? Wives, do you know what it means to submit to and respect your husbands? Are you doing so knowing that you have ultimately no one to depend on for your needs other than God, your Father through Jesus Christ?

Mourn – Is there a ‘no compromise’ law in your home that sin will not be tolerated? Is there an understanding that when repentance is not forthcoming, the family government is not absolute?

Meek – Husbands, do you have a true masculine meekness that imitates Christ's gentleness and kindness towards your wife and towards her children? Wives, do you display patience, and trust, confidence and contentment in God's providential will in the events of your life, including the imperfect husband God has given you?

Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness – What are the conversations in your home like? Are they filled with the Word of God, because husbands and wives are reading the Word, husbands are teaching their wives, and parents are teaching their children from the Word of God? Is this occurring, not out of a sense of ‘duty’, but out of an insatiable thirst for God, for truth, and for righteousness?

Merciful – Is your household fumigated regularly of all unconfessed sin, or do you let bitterness and unforgiveness reside, hidden like termites in the foundation of your home?

Pure In Heart – Is every day set aside, consecrated to God for His sanctification of you, your spouse, your children, your marriage? Or is it “Saturday, and Saturday's are for me....” Also, is the marriage bed kept honorable, pure, peaceful, and delightful, by and for both parties?

Peacemaker – Is your home characterized by warmth, peace, laughing, love, conversation, celebration, reconciliation? Or are there sounds of doors slamming, wives shouting, husbands swearing, children sulking, and long periods of silence that are deafening?

Persecuted – Husbands, do you refuse to enter into the lewd joking, and wife-bashing talk at work? Will you take the heat when the name-callers think you pay too much attention to your wife and children? Or how about when your boss thinks so...? As a family, do you say ‘no’ to other activities in order not to forsake this assembly?