

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

"Part XIV: Renewing Household Marriages: Addressing Roadblocks - Overcoming In Divorce/Remarriage Trials"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The Atlantic ("Divorce and Kids: The Evidence Is In") that Hallmark greeting cards have promoted divorce as a fine experience: one card reads "Think of your former marriage as a record album. It was full of music -- both happy and sad. But what's important now is -- YOU! The recently released HOT, NEW SINGLE! You're going to be at the TOP OF THE CHARTS!"

(2) However, divorce and remarriage is not all it has thus been promoted to be. Note the following facts:

(a) Diane Medved's book, The Case against Divorce reports on her pilgrimage as a counselor and psychologist to change from advocating divorce and remarriage to opposing divorce. She wrote: "I've helped plenty of struggling couples though separation and 'liberation.' I originally thought that staying together in turmoil was more traumatic than making the break, that striking down taboos about divorce was part of modern enlightenment. I was **wrong**. As I shifted my professional focus to divorced individuals, the truth was difficult to avoid: treating divorce as 'morally neutral' -- an option no better or worse than staying married -- was irreparably damaging to the very people I wanted to help."

Newsweek reported June 8, 1992 (p. 19-22) that "There is a high correlation between disrupted homes and just about every social problem imaginable . . . over 80 % of the adolescents in psychiatric hospitals came from broken families. Almost 75% of teenage suicides 'occur in households where a parent has been absent'. A study tracking every child born on the Island of Kauai in 1955 for 30 years found that 5 out of 6 delinquents with an adult criminal record came from families where (a parent) was absent.' The ability to learn is impaired, especially for boys growing up without fathers. A 1988 government survey of 17,000 children, Zinmeister reports, found that 'children living apart from a biological parent are 20 to 40 % more vulnerable to sickness . . . They are even 20 to 30% more likely to be injured in an accident.'"

In view of the facts, what can we do to avoid divorce? What about the **divorced, or the divorced and remarried?!**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "With the many problems cropping up from today's cultural promotion of divorce and remarriage, what can people do to become happy in handling problems from past marital mistakes?!"

- I. **When God made marriage, He planned for two virgins, male and female to unite PERMANENTLY in marriage, Gen. 2:21-24.**
- II. **However, SIN disrupted this ideal arrangement in human history:**
 - A. When man sinned, distancing arose between spouses, Gen. 3:6-7, 12.
 - B. In a few generations, men practiced bigamy, Gen. 4:19, 23-24.
 - C. When Israel came out of Egypt, divorce and remarriage was used for wife-swapping, so Moses began to restrict this evil by outlawing remarriage to distant former partners, Deut. 24:1-4 NIV; Mtt. 19:4-8.
- III. **To understand HOW to face the problem of sin as it relates to marital problems, we examine the dynamics of marital dysfunction:**
 - A. Attorneys R. Moots & J. Febroriello, two local divorce lawyers say divorces come from (a) "failure to talk and listen," (b) a loss of love, (c) physical abuse, (d) substance abuse, (e) failure to give up premarital outside interests to focus on the spouse, and (f) **with** these, 90% of the time, a third party "intruder" (lover) to bring the union to an end, Reg. Cit., "Divorce...second on life's stress list", June, 1989.
 - B. The **Bible** identifies these factors as **specific spiritual dysfunctions:**
 1. The (b) loss of love, (c) physical violence and (d) substance abuse factors all arise from man's sin nature according to Gal. 5:19-21a.
 2. When couples fail to (a) "talk and listen" or (e) don't give up outside interests to focus on the spouse, they have adopted worldly values catering to the lusts of the body, the lusts of aesthetic appeal or the pride of this life to feed the selfish ego at the price of ministering in a selfless love to the spouse, 1 Jn. 2:15-16; Gn. 3:6a.
 3. Satan works against marriages, esp. re: (f) drifts toward adultery:
 - a. Satan can tempt men to turn to adultery if the marriage is weak in any way, Eph. 6:12-13 with 1 Cor. 7:5. He can also tempt men to abuse their wives, Ep. 6:12-13 with 5:22-33 implied.
 - b. Satan can tempt women as well toward adultery if the marital union is weak, 1 Cor. 7:5. He can tempt them to be frigid or insubordinate toward the husband, Ep. 6:12-13 & 22-33 implied.
- IV. **Thus, we address these spiritual enemies of the soul as follows:**

- A. For **all** who are in any kind of aberrant, unhappy marital state, there is a **basic** starting point for experiencing marital renewal as follows:
 - 1. Believe on Christ for salvation from sin to be made new in Christ, and be rescued from Satan's rule, Jn. 3:16; 2 Co. 5:17; Col. 1:12-14
 - 2. When this occurs, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the heart and equip us to live uprightly in accord with Scripture relative to our marital status and its history, 1 Co. 7:10-11; Ro. 8:9b; Ga. 5:16-23.
 - 3. As such, (a) confess any sins to restore the Spirit's control of thoughts and actions (1 Jn. 1:9; Ps. 66:18), and (b) depend on the Spirit's power (Gal. 5:16) to obey Scripture, 1 Jn. 2:3-6.
- B. Thus equipped, adjust to the world's system and Satan as follows:
 - 1. Re: the world system, recognize that yielding to the lusts of the body, the aesthetic appeal of the eyes and this life's pride are all ungodly, fleeting, ultimately unfulfilling goals, 1 Jn. 2:15-17a. Rather, heed God's Biblically-revealed will for our marital status; if married, we must value our spouse above these lusts, 1 Jn. 2:17b.
 - 2. Re: the devil, prayerfully take consistent Scripture intake, and trust that Word for marital pressures that arise, Eph. 6:13-18.
- C. Thus equipped, **Scripture** lays out regulations for **various** marital relationship complexities, and what to do with them as follows:
 - 1. Married couples should stay married regardless how Biblical or unbiblical were their marital qualifications when wed, 1 Co. 7:10-11
 - 2. The divorced must remain unwed or be reconciled (providing there has been no intervening marriage), 1 Cor. 7:10-11; Dt. 24:1-4 NIV.
 - 3. People coming to faith in Christ in common law arrangements **ideally** should marry, 1 Cor. 7:24. Yet, with today's complex unions, be sure to gain godly advice if the case is unusual, Pr. 11:14
 - 4. The death of a spouse (or of a former spouse in cases of divorce) constitute grounds permitting remarriage, 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2.
- V. **If Scripture requires that we continue to live in a difficult or unfulfilling marital union or status, we stay productive as follows:**
 - A. For hope, realize that the current, difficult marital state is but a temporal one to be overcome fully at the rapture, Mk. 12:18-25.
 - B. Use this suffering as incentive for trusting God to produce an enormous eternal weight of glory as per 2 Cor. 4:8-11, 16-18.

Application: *To handle any challenge we face due to our marital state, align our lives with God's revealed will in Scripture and shift our values from that of this world to the perfect world to come!*

Lesson: *The eternal plan of God has already made allowance for the tragic sufferings in family life cause by imperfect marital states if we but utilize God's grace to FACE realities here for eternal rewards!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

After detailing a whole series of social ills in the father-poor, often single-adult black family communities across America, Walter Williams, himself of African-American descent, cited a study by Robert Rector, senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation. Rector wrote an article, "God and the Underclass" in the July 1996 issue of National Review. In this work, as reported by Williams, he noted the cure for these social ills: "'Religion is a social penicillin, lethal against a wide array of behavioral pathogens.' He cites a study of black inner-city youth by Harvard University's Richard Freeman: Boys who regularly **attend church** are 50% less likely to commit crimes. They are 54 % less likely to use drugs and 47 percent less likely to drop out of school. In Rector's own studies, he finds that **churchgoing** boys and girls are two-thirds less likely to engage in teen sex. Regular church attendance **halves** the chances a woman will have a child out of wedlock."

If mere RELIGION does this for people in the black community where fatherhood is at a premium today, then think of what could occur if ALL Americans attended and heeded the teachings of BIBLE-TEACHING, GOSPEL-PREACHING churches! The transformation of individuals and of MARRIAGES in our society would transform our society in a single generation!

The answer is once again CHRIST as revealed in the Bible! Turn to HIM with the marital arrangement problems we have -- He is our only hope!