

The End of the Dream

INTRODUCTION

Why consider this material?

- Your future might include these challenges.
- Others you love will face these things.
- We must keep mortality in view if we are to enjoy marriage as Jesus intends.

DIVORCE

God despises divorce (Mal. 2:16) as someone who knows this pain personally (Jer. 3:7–8).

“This is another thing you do. You are covering the Lord’s altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer respects your offerings or receives them gladly from your hands. 14 And you ask, “Why?” Because even though the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, you have acted treacherously against her. She was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant. 15 Didn’t God make them one and give them a portion of spirit? What is the one seeking? Godly offspring. So watch yourselves carefully, so that no one acts treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 “If he hates and divorces his wife,” says the Lord God of Israel, “he covers his garment with injustice,” says the Lord of Armies. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously” (Mal. 2:13–16).

“I thought, ‘After she has done all these things, she will return to me.’ But she didn’t return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 I observed that it was because unfaithful Israel had committed adultery that I had sent her away and had given her a certificate of divorce. Nevertheless, her treacherous sister Judah was not afraid but also went and prostituted herself” (Jer. 3:7–8).

1. What is divorce?

Biblically: the public and formal acknowledgement that the one-flesh union has been broken and the marriage covenant dissolved.

2. Why does God oppose divorce?

- a. Because God is a covenant-keeping God (Mal. 2:14).
- b. Because one of God’s purposes for marriage is to produce godly offspring (Mal. 2:15).
- c. Because divorce destroys a picture of God (Matt. 19:1–9).

Biblical Marriage

Lesson 21

3. When does God allow for divorce?

When divorce would be a formal recognition that the marriage covenant has been broken.

Examples in Scripture:

- Sexual immorality (Matt. 19:9).
- Abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:15).
- Neglect (Exod. 21:10–11).

Applying biblical teaching on divorce to an individual's situation requires a great deal of judgment and should always be done under submission to one's church, led by one's elders.

DISILLUSIONMENT

Our culture's answer: admit "irreconcilable differences" and divorce.

The pain of a difficult marriage.

God's purpose for us to portray his goodness is not undone by a difficult marriage.

"In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by the way their wives live 2 when they observe your pure, reverent lives. 3 Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, 4 but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 5 For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation" (1 Pet. 3:1–6).

Two ways our lives show off the goodness and glory of God:

- Thankful enjoyment when things are going well.

"For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4).

- Joyful trust when things are difficult.

"Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Biblical Marriage

Lesson 21

1. Reasons for hope in a difficult marriage.

- *God will use all things for our good—no matter the source of the difficulty.*

“For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. 11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:10–11).

- *Faith-filled perseverance in love is deeply precious to God.*

“You yourself have recorded my wanderings. Put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book?” (Ps. 56:8).

- *God will provide all that we need.*

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you” (1 Pet. 5:6–7).

- *God may choose to intervene in this life.*

“Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife” (1 Cor. 7:16).

2. Ways to help those in a difficult marriage.

- *Persistent prayer and friendship.*
- *Understanding.*
- *Encourage their faith.*

“And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works” (Heb. 10:24).

DEATH

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, since that is the end of all mankind, and the living should take it to heart” (Eccl. 7:2).

How does this consideration change a marriage for the better?

Biblical Marriage

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1. Reminds us that we are stewards, not owners.

“A person should think of us in this way: as servants of Christ and managers of the mysteries of God. 2 In this regard, it is required that managers be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:1–2).

One purpose of marriage is “To prepare each other for the approach of death, and comfort each other in the hopes of life eternal” (Richard Baxter, *Works IV*: 234, *The Poor Man’s Family Book*).

2. Reminds us to savor the gift of marriage right now.

“Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun, all your fleeting days. For that is your portion in life and in your struggle under the sun” (Eccl. 9:9).

3. Helps us to see the eternal beauty that God is working into your spouse.

a. *Changes how we view weakness.*

“For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. 18 So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17–18).

b. *Grieving with hope.*

“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, concerning those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest, who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13).

c. *Death reminds us that true love always points beyond itself, to the one who gave it.*

“Then I heard something like the voice of a vast multitude, like the sound of cascading waters, and like the rumbling of loud thunder, saying, Hallelujah, because our Lord God, the Almighty, reigns! 7 Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself. 8 She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure. For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, “Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!” He also said to me, “These words of God are true” (Rev. 19:6–9).

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. 3 Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: Look, God’s dwelling is with humanity, and he will live with them. They will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them and will be their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away” (Rev. 21:1–4).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

MARRIAGE—GENERAL TITLES

When Sinners Say “I Do”: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage by Dave Harvey
The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God by Timothy and Kathy Keller
This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence by John Piper
Love That Lasts: When Marriage Meets Grace by Gary and Betsy Ricucci
Marriage Matters: Extraordinary Change Through Ordinary Moments by Winston T. Smith
The Intimate Marriage: A Practical Guide to Building a Great Marriage by R. C. Sproul
Marriage: 6 Gospel Commitments Every Couple Needs to Make by Paul David Tripp

MARRIAGE—SPECIFIC TITLES

Purpose of Marriage

God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation by Andreas Köstenberger and David Jones
Building Strong Families, Dennis Rainey & Wayne Grudem (ed.)

Pattern of Marriage

Feminine Appeal: Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother by Carolyn Mahaney
The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective by Martha Peace
The Complete Husband: A Practical Guide to Biblical Husbanding by Lou Priolo
The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective by Stuart Scott

Practice of Marriage

Date Your Wife by Justin Buzzard
Practicing Affirmation: God-Centered Praise of Those Who Are Not God by Sam Crabtree
Sexual Intimacy in Marriage by William Cutrer and Sandra Glahn
The Christian Lover: The Sweetness of Love and Marriage in the Letters of Believers by Michael A. G. Haykin
Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know by C. J. Mahaney
Resolving Conflict: How to Make, Disturb, and Keep Peace by Lou Priolo
Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home by Ken Sande
War of Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles by Paul David Tripp
The Marriage Challenge: A Finance Guide for Married Couples by Art Rainer
Family Money Matters by John Temple

Periods of Marriage

Walking through Infertility: Biblical, Theological, and Moral Counsel for Those Who Are Struggling by Matthew Arbo
Tying the Knot: A Premarital Guide to a Strong and Lasting Marriage by Rob Green
Your Family, God’s Way: Developing and Sustaining Relationships in the Home by Wayne Mack
Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches by Russell Moore
Fighting for Your Marriage While Separated: A Practical Guide for the Brokenhearted by Linda W. Rooks
Divorce Recovery: Growing and Healing God’s Way by Winston T. Smith