

# Before You Throw In The Towel

**Introduction.** Once upon a time, and it was not so very long ago, divorce was considered shameful in our society, and it was almost unheard of among the people of God. But this is no longer the case. It is considered by most people in our society today as an acceptable, even preferable, alternative to an unhappy marriage. And it is even celebrated by some. With such reaction to divorce, it is no wonder that such a high number of marriages fail, usually for the following reasons: illness, job changes, childbirth, living apart, trauma, becoming empty-nesters, and infidelity.

From years of preaching the gospel and the knowledge that experience brings, there is likely a married couple in this audience who either has, is, or will be thinking about divorcing their mate. I am glad you are here because your presence indicates that you have not yet given up, that you are still searching for answers, and that you are considering the spiritual consequences of your thinking.

People would not even consider divorce were it not for the terrible pain and frustration that accompanies a troubled marriage. People invest a lot of time thinking about the divorce alternative. Sometimes, however, the pain of a ruptured relationship keeps us from thinking as clearly as we should. That pain can hide from us real consequences of divorce that we need to consider. So, before you throw in the towel on your marriage, there are four thoughts I want you to consider.

## **I. Think About Your Commitment**

- A. It is important that our word means something. It is important that we tell the truth and fulfill what we commit to do (Ecclesiastes 5:4).
- B. On your wedding day you made a promise "... to have and to hold ..." your mate. These are words of ownership and commitment.
  1. There is a unique sense in which you possess your mate and your mate possesses you (1 Corinthians 7:4).
  2. Your promise "to hold" meant you would grasp and not let go. It was a promise that you are committed to the relationship. It reflected the principle taught in Genesis 2:24. A man (or woman) would be "cemented" or "glued" to one another and become one flesh. If you divorce, you break these promises.
- C. When you were married you promised to live with your mate "... for better or worse ..." You promised that you would be there in good times and in bad, regardless of circumstances — and a vow is a vow!
  1. It is a vow for the better times — to stay by, love, and protect your mate.
  2. It is a vow for the worse times.
    - a) It is a vow that covers times when health fails and when your mate is sometimes unlikeable or even unbearable.
    - b) You promised not to give up no matter what the circumstances, even the inconvenient ones. Marriage is not until you get tired of trying!
- D. You promised that you would live with you mate "... for richer or for poorer ..."
  1. You promised that whatever comes, however long it stays, however tough it gets, we are in this together, even when expenses spiral and standards of living plummet

2. A large amount of divorces occur because of finances or a lack thereof. Why? Just because the “poorer” part of the vow may have been present longer does not give you the license to break it.
- E. You made a promise to stay with your mate until “death do you part,” which is a promise of permanence.
1. A couple who had been married for 70 years was asked the secret of staying together for so long.
  2. They replied, “We made a promise and it is still good” (Matthew 19:6; Romans 7:2).

## **II. Think About Your Children**

- A. The median length for a marriage in America today is 11 years which means that divorces will involve children. They are the true victims. Most parents do not think about the lasting impact of divorce on their children, who are truly gifts from God (Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 17:6), and the answer to prayer: Isaac (Genesis 25:21), Leah (Genesis 30:17-22), Rachel (Genesis 30:22-24), and Zechariah (Luke 1:13).
- B. Divorce shatters stability in the minds of your children.
1. The home provides stability and security for children (regardless of age). Many parts of our lives change, but if the home is secure, we are secure.
  2. Rip the home apart and ...
    - a) Esteem falls. Your child wonders, “I must not be as good as others.”
    - b) Confidence dissipates. Your child wonders, “If my parent failed, I must have failed.”
    - c) Effectiveness as a person lessens. Your child did not have the role models needed to teach them how to handle the setbacks of life.
  3. Nothing in the world is as important to a child’s sense of well-being than the healthy marriage of their parents.
    - a) Divorce forces your children to take sides.
    - b) Divorce creates distrust in some children of their parents.
    - c) Divorce causes children to be suspicious of entering into marriage relationships of their own and it creates a generational divorce pattern.
      - (1) A large percentage of younger couples who file for divorce had parents who were divorced.
      - (2) We are sadly witnessing “third generation” divorces today.
    - d) Divorce creates bitterness and animosity against one or both parents thereby making it difficult for a child to honor his parents.
    - e) Divorce creates a rootlessness in your child.
      - (1) Every family has family traditions: favorite foods, functions, heirlooms, recipes, places, and events that give children a sense of having roots.
      - (2) But divorce tends to shatter these and leaves children with no real place to call home.
  4. Most couples never stop to consider what their divorce means from the perspective of their children.
    - a) Their future birthday gatherings and weddings are seriously affected in the future. Can both parents attend, especially if they are remarried by then?

- b) The birth of your grandchildren and attendance at graduations and awards banquets become awkward and embarrassing.
- c) Holidays and special events also become delicate times, especially when spouses remarry.

### **III. Think About Yourself**

- A. Divorce affects the conscience.
  - 1. Like any other sin, an unscriptural divorce pricks the conscience (Psalm 6:6-7).
  - 2. Often, even in a divorce for adultery one is left asking nagging questions that do not easily go away:
    - a) What could I have done?
    - b) Where did I go wrong?
    - c) Could it have been my fault?
- B. Divorce damages your influence.
  - 1. We easily forget that our lives are models for other people (Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5).
  - 2. When your marriage is strong, people look to you. When your marriage fails, there may be couples who will then accept their failing as inevitable.
- C. Divorce increases the tendency for a pattern of failure.
  - 1. When a person fails in the most important relationship of his life, he tends to start accepting failure in others.
  - 2. This is where it becomes critical for someone's faithfulness. I have heard of so many Christians who give up on God after going through a divorce, even when they are innocent of unrighteousness.
- D. Divorce creates loneliness which can lead to sin.
  - 1. Divorce increases the chances of entering into an unscriptural marriage.
  - 2. Jesus said that unscriptural divorce "causeth her to commit adultery" or puts one in the position to be tempted to remarry (Matthew 5:32).

### **IV. Think About Your Destiny**

- A. Many are bailing out of their marriages, refusing to work their problems out in a godly fashion, and committing sin in doing so (Malachi 2:16).
- B. Many are forfeiting their souls every day, not willing to make their marriage better, by discarding their mates by divorce for any reason (Matthew 19:6, 9).
- C. There is nothing in life worth the price of our soul (Mark 8:36-37; Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 21:8).

**Conclusion.** Somewhere tonight there is (or will be) a young woman, with dinner on the table, anxiously looking out a living room window for the sight of her husband's vehicle coming up the drive. But it will not come. Somewhere there are two small children huddled fearfully in their bedroom listening to their mom and dad fight and it seems like it will never end. Somewhere in a night club, there are two people locked in a passionate embrace while their mates are elsewhere feeling the pain of rejection and the fear of loneliness.

I wish this were not so, but it is. And if you find yourself considering divorce, realize it is always better to put forth the effort at reconciliation — both in time and eternity. There is no challenge strong enough to destroy your marriage as long as you are both willing to stop fighting against each other and start fighting for each other.

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