



Easy Divorce

September 7

INTRODUCTION: Through faithfulness to the intent of the Law and not only its external observance a Disciple of Jesus is enabled to live righteously to God's glory. **KEYPOINT:** Jesus' disciples must pursue true marriage and not circumvent God's intent.

NOTE: Aside from our Handbook's brief Ethical Statements (2.3 and 2.4) we have no official stance on divorce and remarriage as a congregation. The views on this important and often debated matter expressed here are that of Pastor Chris.

CHALLENGE: In one sitting, read the whole sermon often over the coming months.

FIRST, A.M. SERMON RECAP (Prov 1:7)

- Does our culture esteem wisdom today?
- What is the fear of the Lord?
- What is wisdom?
- Who are the Wise, the Simple and the Fools?
- What difference does wisdom make in our lives?
- How to we obtained/cultivate a wise life?

READ: Mt 5:31–32 (c.f. Mt 19:1–12)

QUESTIONS:

1. How are lust (previous passage) and divorce related?
2. C.f. Mt 19:3- *Jesus lived in an easy-divorce culture. Dt 24:1–4 made a restricted allowance for divorce. Rabbis misconstrued this and missed God's design. They debated what constituted a legitimate reason (e.g. "for any cause"). Some Rabbis limited divorce to unfaithfulness while some even extended it to spoiling the husbands supper or finding a "fairer" woman! Jewish women who wanted a divorce had to demand it of their husband; Roman law permitted a wife to divorce.*

1. **How is our culture not that dissimilar? Why is divorce so easy and so common today?**¹
2. V. 31- *"It was also said" is a reference to Dt 24:1–4. Divorce was permitted in the OC but it did function to limit it and protect the wife in the midst of a wider ancient culture that allowed for easy divorces (e.g. Esther 1:19).*
3. V. 32- *Like other areas, Jesus addressed how the Jews had circumvented the intent of the Law to justify their easy divorces. In not wanting to be guilty Jesus said they were guilty! C.f. Mt 19:4–6- In answering the Pharisees question about easy divorce Jesus pointed them to God's original intent in Gen 2:24 (in this way the Law Moses acted a bit like a schoolmaster to return the Jews to God's intent, c.f. Gal 3:24). Malachi 2:13–16 also speaks strongly against divorce and examines marriage's intent.*
4. **What was God's original intent for marriage?**
5. **How does our sin/hardness of heart effect this?**
6. **How can we look for loopholes and miss God's intent?**
7. V. 32- *Rather than prohibiting divorce outright (we'll return to divorce & remarriage) Jesus points out the visible way the man and women are made to sin when the intent of the Law is not pursued.*
(C.f. Mt 19:9)- Jesus is saying, if the man sought an easy divorce and divorced his wife unlawfully : a) there was a good chance she would not return to her family for security but unlawfully remarry, thus causing her to sin and the first husband to be doubly guilty, b) if a man or woman (unlawfully divorced) married a second time they both committed adultery. The only exception to this is in the case of the injured party ("except for sexual immorality")² for which it is not morally wrong to divorce and therefore remarry³ (note: it is permitted but not required). In 1 Cor 7 death [v. 39] and desertion by an unbelieving spouse [v. 16] are given as two other grounds for a lawful divorce). While permitting remarriage for the injured he prohibits it for the divorcer (God seeing the divorce as invalid). While Jesus does seem to recognize the reality of a second marriage ("whoever marries," c.f. Jn 4:17–18), it

¹FYI- For a shorty history of divorce laws in Canada click [here](#).

² Sexual immorality can include adultery or be used as a parallel and distinct term.

³ This is the classic evangelical view (e.g. John Calvin and John Gill).

certainly begins in adultery and at the least remains shrouded in sin. Jesus puts forward a very high view of marriage and the failure to seek it is certain messy.

8. **WORLD: Given the gravity of unrepented adultery (1 Cor 6:9–20), what hope is there apart from the Gospel for those who spurn God’s ways and seek their own? How can we minister in the midst of a divorce culture?**
9. *DISCIPLE: the point is clear: marriage is more than sex and sentiment, it requires commitment and real love (preferring the other). If we want to follow Jesus and please Him we must not seek loopholes but pursue God’s intent with God’s help.*
10. **In what ways can we as individuals and churches proactively foster stronger marriages or intervene early to try to save marriages?**
11. **How is a remembrance of God’s faithfulness to the Church important in marriage? (Hos 2:19–20; c.f. Eph 5:25b)**
12. **In all instances why is grace and truth critical?**

Next Week: Oaths, Mt 5:33–37