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God hates divorce

and so do we

Malachi 2:16

"I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel,

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What did Jesus say?

Mark 10:2-12, Matthew 19:3-9

3 The Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful for a person to divorce his wife **“for Any Matter?”**’ 9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, **except for “Indecency”** and marries another, commits adultery.'

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What did Jesus say?

A straightforward reading of the text ...

1. Several obvious difficulties
2. A fundamental flaw
3. **ESSENTIAL QUESTION:** *What would those who were hearing Jesus' words for the very first time have understood?*

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What did Jesus say?

The Context

The Hillelite and Shammaite Debate

- Shammai says: “only indeceny”
- Hillele says: “any matter”

Matthew has added these two summaries to his account (e.g.. Is it lawful to buy **alcoholic** drink if you are under 18?)

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What did Jesus say?

Looking at these verses in a new light

1. Jesus talks about marriage

- Marriage is monogamous (v5)
- Marriage is designed to be lifelong (v6)
- Marriage should only be ended by divorce in case of hard-heartedness (v8)
- Marriage should even survive adultery where possible (v8)
- Marriage is not compulsory (v10-12)

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What did Jesus say?

Looking at these verses in a new light

2. Jesus is brought back to the issue of divorce

- He sides with the Shammaites
- He expresses his heart for people in the face of divorce
- He condemns divorce for “any matter” but not for “indecency.”

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What did Jesus say?

SUMMARY

Jesus permits divorce

- not for “any reason” but for “indecency”
- And only after forgiveness has been offered & repentance sought.
- After such a divorce a person may marry again

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*But what about the other OT
grounds for divorce?*

OT Grounds for divorce

Traditional OT Grounds before the “Any Matter” idea were:

- Adultery - Deut 24.1
- Infertility - Gen 1.22, 28
- Physical and/or emotional abuse - Exod 21.10f

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OT Grounds for divorce

What did Jesus say about them?

- Adultery - Jesus sides with the Shammites
- Infertility - Jesus is against (Matt. 19:10-12)
- Physical and/or emotional abuse
 - An argument from silence

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What did Jesus say?

Jesus permits divorce ...

- not for “any reason” but for “indecency,” physical and/or emotional abuse.
- And only after forgiveness has been offered & repentance sought.

after such a divorce a person
may marry again

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What did Paul say? (1 Cor 7)

1. Paul talks **FIRST** about the responsibility of marriage

- **Conjugal obligations (v3-5)**
- **Material obligations (33-34)**
- **Believers must only marry Christians (v39)**

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What did Paul say? (1 Cor 7)

2. Paul talks about divorce

- Believers should not use “divorce by separation” i.e.. “Any matter” divorce (v10-14)
- If they have they should attempt to reverse it (v11)
- If ‘victims’ of divorce by separation they are “no longer enslaved” (v15)
- There are valid grounds for divorce (eg desertion) (v15)

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What did Paul say? (1 Cor 7)

3. Paul talks about remarriage

- 1 Cor 7:15 “no longer enslaved

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Cultural context

Remarriage

- In Jewish & the Graeco-Roman world divorce was always so you could remarry.
- *Remarriage was such a firmly established right, in both Jewish and Graeco-Roman law, that it would require a very definite statement in the New Testament to convince them otherwise.*
- Dr David Instone-Brewer

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Overall Summary

Marriage should be lifelong

Divorce should be avoided wherever possible

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Overall Summary

A Christian should ...

- never cause divorce by breaking the marriage vows
- & offer forgiveness to the erring partner

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Overall Summary

No fault divorce is condemned

- but divorce is permissible following
 - Unrepentant adultery
 - or systematic (unrepentant) physical and/or emotional abuse
- Remarriage is permissible after such a divorce

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Implications for the church

The Church should teach

- Lifelong marriage
- That marriage must be a complete oneness including faith
- That “no-fault” divorce is always wrong
- That celibacy is a “better” option

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Implications for the church

The Church should help

- marriages to remain strong
- divorce to be avoided
- encourage forgiveness towards a repentant partner

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Implications for the church

The Church should be a place of healing

- for those suffering from
- or travelling through the trauma of divorce
- divorce is NOT the sin

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