

Separation and Divorce

Divorce never comes from the Christian's side. That's plainly taught in the Bible. We stick by our promises, regardless of how our marriage goes; "for better or worse, in sickness or health."

Psalm 116

¹⁴ I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.

1 Corinthians 13

⁷ Love endures all things.

Any standard lower than this leads to adultery, if either of the separated parties marries again.

Luke 16

¹⁸ Whosoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery: and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery.

If the laws of our country grant these easy divorces, let them bear the consequences of setting aside nature's laws, but let us not participate in it lest we share the guilt and the curse that comes with it. For the curse is coming quickly, and is already among us in the form of a wild and selfish generation.

Separation does not come from the Christian's side either:

1 Corinthians 7

²⁷ Are you bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.

1 Corinthians 7

¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.

Note that it's always "the unbeliever" who departs, or perhaps in some cases who requests the believer to leave.

There is however a Biblical allowance for temporary separation:

Matthew 10

²³ But when they persecute you in this city, flee into another...

In cases of physical violence, this is a wise course. God does not call us to be martyrs behind closed doors, where it would benefit nobody. But a separation for cause of physical violence is not a divorce. It is a temporary arrangement to help the violent wake up to what they are doing.

There is much talk today about other kinds of abuse: emotional, verbal, etc. The Christian will live above these kinds of offenses. If we feel emotionally abused by the words or actions of others, it is a clear warning to us that we are centering around ourselves rather than Christ. A real Christian will not be disturbed by offensive words, as Jesus made plain:

Matthew 5

¹¹ Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ellen White wrote to one couple who were imagining themselves as victims:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 242

Brother and Sister G, both of you need to watch your words; for just as surely as there is not a sentinel placed over your thoughts and actions, you will discourage each other and make it a sure case that neither of you can be saved. Both of you need to guard against a hasty spirit, which prompts hasty words and actions. Resentment, which is indulged because you think you have been misused, is the spirit of Satan and leads to great moral evil. When you are controlled by a hasty spirit you deprive your reason, for the time, of the power of regulating your words and your conduct, while you make yourselves responsible for all the evil consequences...Unless you exercise self-control you will be a most unhappy couple. You each ascribe your unhappy life to

the faults of the other; but do this no more. Make it a rule never to speak a word of censure to each other, but commend and praise whenever you can.

When people dwell too much on themselves, even words that are not intended to be offensive will offend them, and give rise to the charge of “abuse.”

1 Kings 18

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Are you the one that troubles Israel?

¹⁸ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father’s house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baalim.

It was Ahab’s own sins, and the sins of his nation that brought the drought upon them. Had it not been for the mercy of God, and the sacrifice of His prophets, the drought would have come a long time ago.

1 Kings 22

⁷ And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?

⁸ And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

“I don’t like him because he speaks evil of me,” king Ahab said about the faithful prophet. But this prophet was simply speaking the plain and honest truth. But because the king did not want to face his sins, he blamed the prophet as an “evil-speaker,” or in our modern terminology, a “verbal abuser.”

When Stephen spoke the truth under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Jewish leaders could not bear it, and stoned him (*Acts 7*). But Stephen was not abusing them, he was simply laying their sins before them in a plain and reasonable way, sins that they did not want to admit to.

We must resist all attempts to “bend the rules” of marriage,

especially where children are involved, for if the children witness this, seeds are planted which will bring a harvest of evil beyond that generation, and even for generations to come:

Exodus 34

⁷ ...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Ellen White wrote many counsels for difficult family situations, but she never counseled believers to leave their partners, even in the case that they were married to unbelievers. She simply warned that they will be in a home “where the shadows are never lifted.” “Never lifted,” means the marriage cannot be set aside just because of incompatibilities, or even religious differences.

Some people suppose that in order to serve God better, they must remove themselves from their spouse, whom they feel is hindering their service. But while God certainly must come first, He puts us in a sinful society as witnesses to His unchanging character and Law.

Isaiah 43

¹⁰ You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

If we think we have to change the Law in order to be better witnesses, then we are only deceiving ourselves, because we are telling the world that God's Law needs to be changed in order to keep it. By our witness we are destroying what we claim to uphold. We may fool ourselves, and our friends may flatter us, but unbelievers who look on are not fooled by the hypocritical claims, and false show. You cannot claim to serve God, yet tear down His Law!

No, instead of changing the Law to suit our feelings and the tendencies of a corrupt society, we need to be changed

within ourselves, so that we can keep that Law within the sinful society, and thus bring a positive change into that society. It is spiritual faithfulness that God looks for, not a change of outward circumstances. We are to stand and resist the tide that flows around us.

John 17

¹⁵ I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil.

How did Jesus overcome the evil? He went into the wilderness and met temptation, and stood His ground. With faith and the Word of God, He could not be overcome.

It is generally the case that if a woman becomes unsatisfied with her husband (and of course in the other direction too), she finds hundreds of faults and failings that she will use to justify a separation. But these are just excuses for a lack of love, and are attempts to cover her own lack of love and hardness of heart. Since the fall of man, fig leaves to cover nakedness, and excuse-making, have always gone hand-in-hand (see *Genesis 3:7-13*).

Because the husband is in a leading role in the family, the wife imagines herself under bondage to a tyrannical ruler, and imagines that in resisting his rule, she is asserting her own liberty and establishing justice and freedom. But this is the very same path that Lucifer took in heaven, when his admiration of himself was out of proportion with reality, and so he imagined himself oppressed by an unfair God.

1 Corinthians 13

⁵ [love]...seeks not her own.

If the husband really has all the faults that she imagines him to have, then that is all the more reason for staying with him, because he needs more help. This is the way love will think. Where there is the greatest need, the greatest love is shown.

Matthew 9

¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?

Applied to our marriage example, the question would be: “Why do you stay with such an unsuitable marriage partner?”

¹² But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that are whole do not need a physician, but they that are sick.

Apply it again: “Those that are perfect marriage partners do not need help. I stay with them because they need help and an opportunity to grow and learn.”

¹³ But go and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Apply it again: “God does not want us to sacrifice others but to show mercy. It is the only way to bring them to repentance, so that they can be restored into God’s image again.”

In the Bible (*1 Samuel 25:3-39*), Abigail was married to a husband that truly was making serious mistakes. He offended David to the point where David was coming with his army to punish the man. But after turning David from his wrath that would have fallen on her household, and pleading forgiveness for her husband’s sins, as if they were her own, Abigail returned to her husband and remained there until his death. God’s providence terminated the marriage, not Abigail, not David, and not Nabal.

This is how that godly woman dealt with a bad situation in her marriage. She made the best of it, and brought good out of evil. God called attention to this example by writing it in His book, as a lesson for others who may find themselves in similar situations.

Marriage is something we should not mess with. It is a law of nature that undergirds the stability of society in a thousand ways. Tampering with the foundations is always dangerous work, and when the fabric of society falls apart, the suffering

will be immense.

Psalm 11

³ If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

The pictures of history are full of tragedy and untimely death. But seldom are the root causes of these sufferings traced out. But the root causes come from setting aside the Law of God in the personal life: justifying sin, selfishness, evil-speaking, hardness of heart, and manifesting these things in the marriage life; and then covering them all up with excuses and white-wash; calling them “love.”

But when hate is confused with love, then the ability of people to distinguish between the two is destroyed, and that sets the stage for the kinds of horrific events of the last hundred years, where human life and dignity were trod underfoot on a massive scale, and those who participated in those deeds had little remorse or conscience about doing them. They did it for the “love” of their country. But trampling down the rights of others is never love...it is only a selfish kind of grasping, that will bring it's harvest of evil in return.

There are too many people who want to escape an unpleasant situation that they are bound into, and try to look for ways out. But we must stop trying to escape the school of life, especially when it means violating our vows, and thus lessening the authority of the divine Law in the sight of others.

A thousand excuses, even good religious ones, could be made:

“I will be more effective in the Lord’s work.”

“I’ll be free to devote my time and money to Him.”

“I will be free to develop my full potential.”

None of these excuses are true, for the Lord wants us to develop our potential by overcoming our own sin, not by mistreating others, or holding back from them the service that we owe and have promised to give.

Moses, Joseph, Job, David, and all the righteous characters of the Bible faced hard circumstances at different times in their lives. They achieved success by going through those circumstances with God's grace. The circumstances did not cripple them, but were just the barriers they needed to develop strength, courage, patience, determination, and faith.

There is no justification for setting aside the Law. The life of Jesus Christ was such a glorious life because He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). This means he kept the Law perfectly. Thus He showed the way to a truly fulfilled life.

Joseph accepted his lot without complaining, and embraced the hard school God allowed him to go through. This school brought him into slavery, and then into prison. It looked like a disaster, and it would have been so easy for Joseph to dream and scheme his way out of these troubles. He could have said,

"I will just die here, and then what good will I be to man or to God? It would serve God better if I escaped from this terrible situation, so that I could be free to develop my talents in active work."

But he believed that God was intimately in control of his life, and that these terrible situations were actually, in some way that Joseph did not know, going to work out God's purpose in the earth. So he made the best of that situation, and whatever condition he was placed in, took it as from the Lord, and put his whole heart and effort into doing his best in that place. This is, of course, just what the Lord needed, for by this humility and meekness to accept his lot, Joseph's character was forming into a beautiful pattern that the Lord would be able to use to show His glory. Indeed, the glory was already shining in the prison, but the Lord had a wider stage yet for Joseph.

And behold what God was able to accomplish through Joseph's faithfulness: the temporal salvation of Egypt and all the nations around, and most likely the spiritual salvation of

many also, who came to know Joseph's God, by this man's faithfulness under all the unpleasant circumstances that life dealt him.

We need the hardships of life, especially in this sentimental age, when people are taught to make their decisions based on their own feelings, and not on reason and faith in the word of God. It is these very situations, which we think are against us, that God will use, if we let Him, to shape us into men and women like Joseph, who will serve and pour forth love under all circumstances, not just under those that please us.

Notice that in the counsel of the apostle Paul to married couples, especially where there were differences in faith, he always pointed them to think of the other, and of the work God wanted to do for the other through them.

1 Corinthians 7

¹⁰ And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

¹¹ But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

¹² But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believes not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

¹³ And the woman which hath a husband that believes not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God has called us to peace.

¹⁶ For what do you know, O wife, whether you shall save your husband? Or how do you know, O man, whether you shall save your wife?

Think of the other, and what you can do for them. That's what we are here on this earth for...to learn a new way of

thinking and acting; heaven's way. Don't throw away your inheritance for an imaginary dream of escape. You cannot escape from yourself and your own selfish thoughts. God wants you to overcome them, therefore He allows you to come into hard situations. Take those situations in the same way that Joseph did, or that Abigail did, and bring light into the darkness.

*Divorce and separate yourself from your own sins,
and not from the partner
whom you have promised
to "love until death."*

There are many atheists in the world today, and some of them are honest in heart. They don't see the power of God, but they see people who profess to serve God acting no better, and sometimes even worse, than those who make no such profession. They don't see the Joseph's and Abigail's. The Lord waits for such witnesses, to reach these honest souls.