

## Avoiding Divorce: Part One

### Scripture

13"This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.14"Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15"But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 16"For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." (NASB)

### Devotion

It amazes me every time I hear the surveys concerning divorce rates that say the divorce rate in the Church is the same for those outside the church. Of course we need to keep in mind that most people on church roles never attend. Still, even with that in mind, divorce is a major problem in the church today.

Dealing with this subject will always solicit comments about extreme cases to justify past divorces. Surely, there are those who have suffered greatly in marriages with abusive and or unfaithful spouses. Whether you believe divorce can be justified in some cases or not is not within the scope of this devotion. However, I hope you will consider some of the root problems associated with divorce.

To begin with, let's call it what it is, treachery. It is betrayal in the highest order. When a couple is married they take an oath before man and God to remain faithful until death. This oath is required to remind us of God's command that no man is to separate what He has joined, and that a one-flesh relationship is formed when a couple unites. As a friend said, "To divorce is to rip the flesh apart." That is never a painless task. When two people live with such intimacy, they are forever joined even if they do divorce.

Now, why do couples get into trouble? First, there is a breakdown in love. Sometimes this problem begins before the couple is even married. To explain this we need to understand that love has two components. Love is both emotional and sacrificial. When a couple says they love each other, they may mean they have a strong emotional attraction to each other. However, emotional attraction without sacrifice is often just lust. Real love must be sacrificial to be called love, and that sacrifice must be real, not just giving to get.

If both spouses are committed to love the other, there would never be any divorce. So let's be honest and admit that divorce is really selfishness. People divorce because they want their way and they can't get it in the marriage. What does this say about their love for God? Judge yourself in this matter that you be not judged (1 Cor. 11:31).

So, how do you start loving if all you have ever done was lust? You begin by confessing and repenting before God. Next, you confess your selfishness and ask your spouse to forgive you. Then you see your marriage as a way to honor the Lord.

The emotions are probably still there even if they have been damaged. However, by living for God in your marriage something wonderful will happen. Your emotions will deepen for your spouse, and your love will become natural. While still sacrificial, the sacrifice will seem of little consequence as blessings begin to flow down from heaven.

So, take some time and evaluate your marriage even if things are good. It could be that things might be even better. Ask yourself, “Do I really sacrifice for my spouse, and is it willful?”

More Later