

THE MAJOR CAUSE OF DIVORCE

by Tony Mauck

Divorce in this country has reached epidemic proportions. "Until death we do part" is a commonly broken vow. On many occasions, it is only honored in a second, third or fourth marriage. What's the problem? I heard recently of a bumper sticker which proclaimed, "The major cause of divorce is marriage." Maybe, this was intended to be cute, but let me assure you that divorce is never something to be taken lightly or flippantly. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).

Divorce always involves sin. Even when God allows a divorce and remarriage, sin is present in the guilty "fornicator" (Matthew 19:9). In all other cases, divorce involves separating what Jesus said should NOT be "put asunder." Divorce, in these instances, is a violation of Jesus' commands to "leave father and mother and cleave" to spouse (Matthew 19:4-5). It evidences disrespect for "what God has joined" (Matthew 19:6). To divorce one's mate for a cause other than "fornication" (Gr. "*porneia*" meaning unlawful sexual intercourse), is to be partly responsible in causing the mate to commit adultery (Matthew 5:32). Jesus here anticipates the result of such a divorce, recognizing the inclination of some would be to find another partner.

Since divorces are so commonplace these days, I'm afraid even some Christians have become somewhat indifferent about them. A couple within a local congregation may get a divorce because they just can't get along with each other. (Is it really a matter of "can't" or more a matter of "won't?") The doctrinal stance of their brethren may be, "Well, just as long as they don't remarry, I guess it's o.k." How could we possibly think this is consistent with God's word? Are God's laws on marriage different from other laws? A refusal to accept God's teaching evidences a lack of faith and is plainly disobedience. Such a divorce is a blatant rejection of truth.

Divorce isn't funny. Ask the one who is put away without desiring it who now has to live alone because his or her mate is depriving them of the fruits of the marriage union (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5). Ask the kids involved. Ask other family members who now have strained relationships with one or both of the parties. Look at what the sin of one person, and sometimes both mates, can cause. Is divorce a laughing matter?

However humorous the bumper sticker was intended to be, the message is untrue. While two-thirds of all teenage marriages and fifty percent of all marriages collectively end in divorce, the cause is not marriage. Marriage was intended by God to be a harmonious relationship between a man and a woman, providing a person with companionship and help (Genesis 2:18; Proverbs 18:22). By God's design, marriage is a right and pleasurable avenue for sexual intimacy and to encourage procreation (Hebrews 13:4; Genesis 2:24). What God instituted was good. If marriage has become a bad thing, it is man's fault, not God's!

If one is looking for the "major" cause of divorce, one only has to look at the major cause of all sin ...SELFISHNESS! Instead of attempting to love and serve the mate, one loves self. The primary cause of divorce is an unwillingness to submit to the law of God. Why have people turned to sexual experimentation to find pleasure? Why are fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism and pornography growing in such sickening fashion? Individuals have refused to accept God's will for their lives. In so doing, they are throwing away the answers for real happiness.

What's the cure for the problem of divorce? It's simply a matter of resolution on the part of two persons to love God and each other. It's a matter of recognizing one's God-prescribed roles within the marriage (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 5:22-31; 1 Peter 3:5-7). If you are married, be committed in making marriage the beautiful and wonderful relationship that God intended it to be. If you are single yet desire to be married one day, be determined to pick a partner who will value God's perfect and lifelong design for the union. The business of a Christian is to put forth an example that declares the benefits of doing things God's way and the unequalled joy of living according to His truth.