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**Title: MARRIAGE, DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE**

**Text: 1 Corinthians 7:10-15**

JOKE – A Sunday School teacher was talking to her class of 4-year-olds, and she said, “Do any of you know what the Bible says about marriage?” One little boy raised his hand. The teacher called on him and repeated the question – “What does the Bible say about marriage?” It says, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” JOKE – The story is told of a guy who wasn’t married yet and he was trying his best to find the perfect girl. He found it very hard to get his parents to agree. He brought a young lady home, and his mother didn’t like her. He proceeded to bring home a second girl; His mother didn’t like her either. He brought home a third girl that his mother did not approve of. So, he found a girl that looked like his mom, that talked like his mom, that walked like his mom, and brought her home. His FATHER didn’t like HER!

We are in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 again this week. We’ve been in a series through 1 Corinthians. Today’s 6 verses are about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. (Know that in the time allowed, we will NOT answer EVERY question on today’s topic.) In the last number of weeks, we have looked at several hot topics. We’ve talked about church discipline. We’ve talked about sex. Today our scripture speaks to us about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. About now, I’m thinking that I’d really like to share a feel-good message, and I’m thinking you might be wanting to hear one. I had wondered if anyone would notice if I skipped over this portion of scripture. Perhaps we could pretend this passage isn’t there. Skip to the next chapter. However, I am mindful that I don’t choose what the Holy Spirit includes in His Scriptures. I heard it said by a pastor recently, “God stocks the pantry; the preacher just prepares the meal.”

Before we get to the heart of our text, I want to remind you that throughout scripture – from Genesis to Revelation – a primary theme, perhaps THE primary theme, is that of RECONCILIATION. Reconciliation between man and man – family reconciliation – reconciliation of one country to another, and, of course, reconciliation of man to God. Included in that reconciliation is the reconciliation of husband and wife. So, know that reconciliation is a part of God’s nature, and it will always be the heart of God. I want you to know, too, that I don’t come to you judgmentally today. I do want God’s very best for you and for me. I KNOW that for many of you, your divorce was one of the most painful times in your life, and likely something you would have avoided if you could have. Sometimes though, divorce is the better option. If you should struggle with something I say, make an appointment to see me. I’m still learning, too.

Today we are looking primarily at the words of Paul. We’ll also look at Matthew chapter 19 to note some words of Jesus. I’ll likely mix in a thought or two. (I encourage you to pay particular attention to the words of Paul and Jesus on the matter at hand.

I’ve heard some Christians talk about divorce like it is THE unforgivable sin. THAT IS A LIE! I trust you’ll see that in today’s study. While there may be a few who haven’t had divorce in their immediate families, I’m sure most have experienced brokenness in their families. For many, the worst pain ever experienced has come at the hand of someone in their family. So, let’s look at what God has for us today. It’s not JUST about divorce. It’s about marriage, and conflict, and the importance of caring for people who have been through a divorce.

**MARRIAGE & DIVORCE – BIBLICAL BACKGROUND.** 1 Corinthians 7:10 – *“To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord):”* What does that phrase mean? “This is not me talking right now, but the Lord.” Didn’t Paul write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, making everything recorded in scripture “from the Lord?” Yes, but all that Paul is trying to indicate here is that he is referring to something JESUS HIMSELF SAID. Jesus had taught clearly on divorce – it’s recorded in Matthew 19. In Matthew 19, Jesus says, *“the wife should not separate from her husband.”* The Greek word for “separate” is *chorizo*, which was the vernacular in that day for “divorce.” Verse 11 – *“(but if she does [get divorced], she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.”* Pretty straightforward, right? But... Then Paul

throws in a wrinkle: <sup>13</sup>*“If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should NOT divorce him.”* Here was the situation: The Corinthian church was filled with new believers (It was a new church), AND... Some of their spouses didn't understand their BELIEVING spouses' new faith. Their homes had now come to feel like spiritual battlegrounds; Their spouses mocked them and antagonized them; and so, not surprisingly, some of them thought, “It would just be easier if I wasn't married to someone who will drag me down spiritually. Surely God does not want me to be in a home where I get no spiritual support, where he or she is always dragging me down. It would be so much easier if I was with someone who encouraged me and built me up spiritually. So, for spiritual reasons, God probably wants me to get divorced.” Paul says, “NO! Even if you think it is better for you spiritually to be separated from your spouse, you should stay with them, for two reasons: FIRST, **MARRIAGE IS A COVENANT UNION** that God established, whereby you promise loyalty and union to someone until DEATH DO YOU PART. When Paul in verse 10 points back to what Jesus taught on divorce in Matthew 19, that was Jesus' main point. God created marriage, at the beginning, to be a picture of His love for us, and it was to be a permanent union, dissolvable only by death. The SECOND reason you should stay married in that situation, Paul explains in verse 14 – **GOD, IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY HAS PUT YOU IN YOUR UNBELIEVING SPOUSE'S LIFE FOR A REASON.** *“For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”* Now, that wording can be confusing – how does my being married to an unbeliever make THEM holy? That's not how holiness works. Holiness doesn't come by osmosis. Paul is using a Jewish metaphor, so to speak. You see, “holy” in its purest context, means “SET APART.” Paul is saying that the fact that you are in the house means that your unbelieving spouse and your kids, if you have them, have been “set apart” for a special opportunity to hear the gospel and see it lived out up close. Your very presence increases their exposure to the gospel, and if you leave, you short-circuit that. I read the testimony of a guy who said that THE ONLY CHRISTIAN IN HIS FAMILY WAS HIS GRANDMOTHER (not the grandfather, aunts, uncles, or anybody else). She faithfully stayed in an environment where she was lonely, had no spiritual encouragement, and sometimes she was ridiculed. YET... One by one the family members started to get saved. Now all the grandchildren are believers. How many of you had a similar situation – one person in your house followed Jesus – a mom, a grandma, an aunt, a dad – somebody, and because of that one person you are now a Christian? Maybe that's your role, and maybe it's not really fulfilling for you. But... Paul says, “God has a purpose for you there. Find your happiness in doing the will of God and in being a vessel for His purposes, even if it's not the greatest situation in marriage. Now, watch this. 1 Corinthians 7:15 – *“But if the unbelieving partner separates (remember, separate/chorizo is the word for divorce), let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not bound.”* (In context, “not bound” means that you are no longer restrained by the marriage covenant, and thus free to remarry.) So, here we have an exception to Jesus' “don't get divorced” teaching. AND... What's Paul's rationale for why this is okay? Look at the next phrase, this is really important: **“BECAUSE GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO PEACE.”** If an unbeliever in the marriage says, “I can't take this,” and divorces you, you don't have to pursue them for the rest of your life, even though you once said before God, “till death do us part.” Why? Because God has called us to peace. The UNBELIEVER has walked away from the covenant. The covenant is dead. God didn't intend it that way, but that's what it is now, and thus, you are “no longer bound.” So, Paul gives an exception to Jesus; “never get divorced” teaching. So, here's the question: Are there OTHER exceptions or is the only justifiable reason for divorce ABANDONMENT by an unbelieving spouse? Well, let's look. Let's go back to Matthew 19, the passage that Paul is basing his teaching on, and see what Jesus says. I'm going to argue that Paul felt the freedom to make the exception he made because of the rationale Jesus used in Matthew 19. Leave your finger in 1 Corinthians 7 and flip back to Matthew 19. Matthew 19:3-9, ESV – <sup>3</sup>*“And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, ‘Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?’”* First, notice the context: This was not an honest pastoral question, but a theological trap. The Pharisees were attempting to set Jesus up with a difficult question so that NO MATTER HOW He answered, He was going to be in trouble with somebody. <sup>4</sup> *He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,’* <sup>5</sup> *and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’* <sup>6</sup> *So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God*

*has joined together, let not man separate.*” So, Jesus’ answer is, “No, it’s not okay for a man to divorce his wife for ‘just any cause.’” Jesus then quotes from Genesis 2, where God establishes marriage, and He points out that marriage was designed by God to be a LIFELONG COVENANT, a UNION LASTING UNTIL DEATH. No man or woman should ever dare separate themselves from a union that God established. In marriage, he has made you one entity, one new body, dissolvable only by death. <sup>7</sup>“*They said to him, ‘Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?’*” They are feeling good. They are like “Ah ha! Got you!” You see, Moses had said in Deuteronomy 24:1, “*If a man takes a wife and marries her, if he finds some indecency in her...*” So, they are like, “if YOU are saying we shouldn’t get divorced, you are contradicting Moses. So, because you are contradicting the Bible, we are forced to conclude that you are a false teacher. Jesus said to them, “*Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, <sup>2</sup>but from the beginning it was not so.*” Jewish scholars had long taught a difference between a command and a concession: A COMMAND is something that God wants ALL people everywhere to do. A CONCESSION was something God ALLOWED BECAUSE OF MAN’S FALLEN CONDITION, to keep peace in a society filled with people at various levels of spiritual maturity. This allowance for divorce, Jesus said, was NOT a command; It was a concession due to our fallen state (or hardness of man’s heart). AND... The Pharisees knew that; that was a well-known distinction in the Jewish law. Which brings us to the SECOND part of their trap, which concerns what Moses meant by “SOMETHING INDECENT.” Moses had said, “*When a man takes a wife and marries her, if he finds some indecency* (In Hebrew, *erwat dabar*, something indecent) in her,” he could divorce her. The QUESTION was, “What QUALIFIES as *erwat dabar*?” That was an ambiguous phrase. There were TWO dominant schools of thought. There was the school of Rabbi SHAMMAI: He said that indecent meant ONLY ‘sexual indecency,’ meaning that Moses was saying that ONLY if a man discovered his wife had been sexually unfaithful could he divorce her. This was the CONSERVATIVE position. You can ONLY divorce for SEXUAL IMMORALITY. On the other side, you had Rabbi HILLEL (R. Hillel was more progressive; he studied at Berkeley, wore Birkenstocks, refused to use plastic straws – that kind of guy). Rabbi Hillel said “indecent” meant ANYTHING YOU DON’T LIKE ABOUT HER. Maybe she had – indecent BEHAVIOR, or indecent COOKING SKILLS, or indecent MORNING BREATH. Seriously, there is record of him saying, “If she consistently burns the bread, *erwat dabar*, you may divorce her.” If ANYTHING about her FEELS “indecent” to you, divorce her (Matthew, *The Expositor’s Commentary*). Here’s the thing: Most of the Jewish world in Jesus’ day (particularly the men) were on the side of Rabbi Hillel – the progressive one. So, the Pharisees are trying to get Jesus on record taking the hardline position so that he’d fall out of favor with the people. Plus, and here was the genius of their trap: John the Baptist had been executed for speaking out against casual divorce and remarriage. He had criticized King Herod for leaving his wife and taking another, and Herod beheaded him for it. So, the Pharisees probably thought, “Look, if we can get Jesus to publicly take positions similar to John the Baptist, maybe we can get Him killed, too.” So, what is Jesus’ answer? <sup>9</sup>“*And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.*” Jesus comes down decidedly on the side of the conservative position. In fact, he strengthens it. Not only is it wrong to divorce someone because you just want to be out of the marriage, but if you get remarried, God considers your new marriage adulterous, at least at the beginning, since in His eyes you are still married to the first person. Jesus bases this on Genesis 2. Marriage, He says, was designed by God to be a relationship in which two lives fuse into one. Your NAMES become one (in most cases); Your FINANCES become one; Your BODIES become one flesh in sex; Your FUTURE and your FAMILIES become one. Marriage demonstrates the unconditional love of God: I am binding myself to you no matter how much you disappoint me or let me down. In fact, Paul would later explain that marriage is a unity that demonstrates the Trinity itself. Two distinct persons with one essence. That kind of unity cannot just be walked away from. Marriage, Jesus says, was never designed by God to be a contract where you have a buy-out option. It’s a fusion of the other person’s life into your life that makes a new single one-flesh entity. So, Jesus says, (v. 6), “*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*” Jesus had a totally different approach to marriage than most people in their culture did and our culture does. Most people approach marriage as if it were a CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP. A CONSUMER relationship is one where you figure out what you need and who best can meet that need. There is nothing wrong with consumer

relationships. I have a consumer relationship with my pharmacy. I go there because it is convenient to my house, it has fairly good prices, and it's close to a coffee shop. However, if I find one that is more convenient or cheaper, I'll go there. That is a consumer relationship. There's nothing wrong with that. BUT... I can't have that kind of relationship with my daughter, Jessica. I don't go to Jessica and say, "You know, Jess, this is just not working out. It's not you, Hon, it's me. I have been hanging out with the neighbor kids and I'm happier with them now." No parent – no GOOD parent – would do that because you know your relationship with your kids is NOT a consumer relationship. That's a COVENANT relationship, at least, the result of a covenant relationship. I'm not bound to Jessica because of what she does for me; I'm bound to her because we're family." Jess is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. So, which kind of relationship is marriage more like? Covenant or consumer? You say COVENANT, but if you get divorced because it is just not working, or because your desires have changed, or your spouse annoys you or, they are just not doing it for you anymore, then you really see it as a CONSUMER relationship. According to Jesus, marriage is a covenant in effect until death do you part. So, if that's the case, is it ever okay to divorce? Jesus says you can do it in the cast of **ADULTERY**. Paul expands that to say **DESERTION BY AN UNBELIEVING SPOUSE**. Why would those be exceptions? The logic of this is very important. Because both adultery and desertion KILL THE COVENANT. When your spouse unites themselves to someone else sexually, they have destroyed the one-flesh covenant with you. So, you are no longer bound, and you are free to remarry. You don't HAVE TO remarry, but it's an option. If your spouse leaves you and divorces you, they have killed the covenant and you are free to remarry. In BOTH CASES, God has called you to peace. Perhaps you ask, "Well, what if there was NO adultery, and technically NO divorce by an unbeliever, but one spouse is ABUSIVE, or maybe they are involved in some ILLEGAL ACTIVITY they refuse to stop that is putting your family at risk?" Well, FIRST you should get yourself out of the situation immediately. If that's you today, come talk to us. OR... If you're not feeling safe, reach out to the Domestic Violence Support Hotline – Write this number down: 800.799.SAFE. ILLUSTRATION: I had a call about 30 years ago from a gal named Bonita. She called me to say that she thought our friend (from church) was about to be killed by her husband. I was shocked! This husband seemed to be a kind, quiet, meek man. I asked Bonita why she called me and what she wanted me to do. She said she had to tell someone, and she didn't know what she wanted me to do. (Here Pastor shared the details of this tragic story.) The outcome was – 4 months later (after my wife and I had transitioned to another church) I got the call that this man had killed his wife in their bedroom and proceeded to take his own life in their field. I'm so glad I had told the wife to get away from him rather than tell her to try and work it out (though she didn't listen to my advice). As far as whether divorce is an option, I would argue that the logic of Paul's and Jesus' exceptions also allow for divorce when a spouse is doing something that makes them UNABLE TO BE LIVED WITH, putting them or their kids in danger. In the same way that adultery or abandonment have killed the covenant, living in an abusive way does too. By the logic of 1 Corinthians 7:15, you are no longer bound. This doesn't mean, by the way, they've gotten annoying, or they've changed, or they are just not doing it for you, or we argue a lot, BUT... that they have killed the covenant by being unsafe to live with. You would do good to do this under close advisement of a Christian counselor or perhaps the support of a pastor. A period of separation may be in order, perhaps even a long one, to give your spouse space to repent. I'd also say, you should bring in those pastors and counselors early. Often, a divorcing spouse will spend a year or more coming to a decision, largely on their own, and then want their church to affirm that decision after a single conversation with their pastor. That puts us in a dilemma. We want to care for you, and we want to understand what you are going through. You've spent a year thinking through this. We want to honor that, and we want to shepherd you well. It is hard to be pastorally responsible in coming alongside you in a decision as weighty as divorce in a single conversation. So, please, bring us in early. But the big point I want you to get is this: from the beginning, God established marriage as a covenant, NOT a consumer relationship: TWO BECOME ONE. Divorce is as radical as AMPUTATING an arm or a leg. There are times when amputation is necessary, but... Any doctor would be run out of practice if he was constantly and quickly saying, "Well, let's just amputate it." "Hang nail? Amputate the toe!" "Varicose veins? Just cut it off at the knees!" "Oh, tattoo removal? Take the arm off." Yes, amputation is sometimes required, but it is radical and the last thing that you do after you have tried literally EVERYTHING else! 21 years ago, Diane's leg

broke from a chondrosarcoma tumor that ate through her femur. The femur bone was splintered. Cancer cells were scattered. In my absence, Diane's doctor shared with her two options. One was to try to save the leg. The other option was an amputation. (Here Pastor gave the details of the story.) There was good reason to amputate, but Diane would have only had ONE leg. In her case, amputation was a viable option, but here it was NOT the BEST option. She still has her leg today! PTL! So, using the time I have left, let me deal with three practical questions: How do I stay in a difficult marriage? If I'm divorced, should I get remarried? If I am divorced and remarried, how does God see me?

**1. HOW DO I STAY IN A DIFFICULT MARRIAGE?** First of all, **REJECT THE "RIGHT PERSON MYTH."** This messes with the Hallmark movie's premise. The "right person myth" says that there is a RIGHT PERSON out there for YOU, and a good marriage is determined by finding THAT RIGHT PERSON. If you don't find that person, you'll never be happy; and... If you ARE unhappy in marriage now, it's because you didn't get the right person. At first you thought they were it, but now you are a little older and wiser and see your mistake. If you could get out of this relationship with them and into one with the "right" person, you'd be happy. BUT... I heard it recently said that – You ALWAYS marry the wrong person. First, because you are a sinner, and they are a sinner. That means they are going to disappoint and fail you. AND... You them. Second, you change over time. Some so-called marriage counselors (experts) say that by the time you make it to 70, you've probably been married to about 5 people because they change, and YOU change. Finally, you always marry the "wrong" person, so to speak, because God's purpose in marriage was NOT restoring the missing part of your soul in another person. That missing piece in you is found in God. God's MAIN purpose in marriage is NOT making you happy with a perfect person. His main purpose in marriage is to teach you to become more like Him by faithfully loving and forbearing with an annoying sinner like He loves and forebears with you. AND... He does that by having you marry an imperfect person. (Anyone here marry an imperfect person? WE ALL DID and WE ALL ARE!) Truth? God uses our imperfect spouse to mature us. That also means that he used us in OUR imperfection to mature our spouse. To be very clear, I'm not saying you can't genuinely be in love with your spouse (I love Diane. I hope you love your spouse.); just don't look to marriage for something it was never designed to give you! Marrying someone new won't fix your emptiness. The truth is that they should never fill the space that belongs to God. It won't cure your problems. So, reject the "right person myth." **DO IT FOR JESUS.** The covenant you made in marriage was first and foremost TO GOD. Even if you weren't a Christian when you got married, marriage was God's creation, and you likely did it in His name. You may not feel, in the moment, that your spouse is worthy of your forgiveness or your continued faithfulness, but JESUS IS. Picture Jesus behind your spouse and respond not so much to your spouse but to Him. You see, professing believers usually get divorced not because they fall out of love with their spouse, but because they fall out of worship of Jesus. You may not feel, in the moment, that that person standing in front of you is worthy of forgiveness, or your continued faithfulness, but Jesus ALWAYS is. Lean into God's grace. Just BEFORE Jesus' teaching on marriage in Matthew 19 is His teaching on forgiveness (chapter 18). Jesus tells a story about a man who has been forgiven like a million dollars (10K talents). You are the person who owes the million dollars. You owe an incredible debt. You beg and plead and to everyone's surprise your debt is forgiven! Realizing that should have changed your heart, right? The debtor is free for the first time in a long, long time. Then, he sees someone who borrowed \$2 for a coffee and demands to be paid back. The one who had been forgiven MUCH would not forgive A LITTLE. For shame! If there's any place where forgiveness must reign supreme, it must be in marriage. We forgive much BECAUSE we have been forgiven much. Did you see in Matthew 19, when Jesus quotes Moses' concession on divorce, WHY Moses said God allowed it? *"Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."* Ultimately it is one's hardened heart that kills a marriage. It is not so much the fights, the frustrations, the lack of fulfillment, or whatever – it is a hardened heart. Jesus can soften that heart through the gospel and His Holy Spirit. So, lean into that – God's grace. Finally, the Apostle Paul adds in 1 Corinthians 7 – **DO IT FOR OTHERS.** Paul urges that spouse, stuck in an unfulfilling marriage to an unbeliever, to lift their eyes beyond themselves to the positive effect that remaining in the marriage will have on others, particularly their kids. You probably don't need me

to cite the stats about the devastation divorce has on kids. Children of divorce are four times more likely to have social problems. Two times more likely to drop out of school. Three times more likely to need psychological help. Five times more likely to be unable to keep a job. One secular marriage author said, "Absolutely, you should stay married just for your kids." (By the way, these stats wouldn't apply to marriages where there is abuse; children fare better in safe environments, even if that means divorce. I'm talking about the disadvantages to the children just because you "fall out of love." The other thing we must consider, as believers, is what a divorce communicates to our kids (and our community) about the love of God. When we walk away from a marriage because we are unhappy, in a manner of speaking we tell them that God's love is conditional; that when we annoy Him or disappoint Him or make Him unhappy, He leaves us. The world desperately needs to know the patient, steadfast, consistent love of God, and our marriages are supposed to demonstrate that! I don't mean to make this devastating: the healing power of God's grace is amazing! I know divorced people that have experienced God's incredible sustaining, renewing grace after divorce. The gospel is that God can take our mistakes and rewrites them with beauty. Divorce doesn't mean the best part of your life is over. **GET SOME COUNSELING.** Diane and I have had counseling and probably should have had more.

**2. SHOULD I GET REMARRIED?** When a divorce is legitimate, remarriage is an option. When Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, "*You are no longer bound,*" he means not only that divorce is okay but that YOU ARE FREE TO REMARRY. However, know that just because you CAN get remarried, doesn't mean you SHOULD. After all, remember, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 that singleness can be a gift. You don't need marriage to be happy. It may be better for you and your kids for you to stay single, and God may have purposes for you in a time of singleness. Don't think automatically that marriage is just what you must do. As we saw earlier in this chapter – Paul says you will likely be more useful to the Kingdom of God if you stay single. BUT... If after you have been divorced, you think remarriage is a gift God is bringing back to you... here are some questions: **HAVE YOU GIVEN GOD TIME TO RESTORE YOUR PREVIOUS MARRIAGE?** If you are coming out of a bad marriage, don't rush into a new one. Realize how much is at stake! Again, it's like amputation; and it's devastating for a lot of people involved, not just you. Even if you are separated or divorced, you ought to ask God to heal your previous marriage and give Him time to do it. By the way, I don't think there is anything in Scripture that says if your spouse committed adultery that the marriage HAS to be over, and that God can't enable you to forgive. Some of the best marriages I know today had that hurt in their past. Even in adultery, God enabled the hurt spouse to show grace and their marriage today is stronger for it! Know that God's grace is amazing. Take time. Some say one full year after the divorce is final. **HAVE YOU GIVEN GOD TIME TO HEAL YOU?** (Again, Get Counseling.)

**3. IF I AM DIVORCED AND REMARRIED, HOW DOES GOD SEE ME?** I'll say what I said at the beginning: Divorce is not the unforgivable sin. Look at Jeremiah 3:8. God says, "*for all her adulteries, I gave faithless Israel a certificate of divorce.*" God has the audacity to call Himself a divorced person! If I were to ask all divorced people to stand up, and God were here, He'd stand up. Now, of course, there was no sin on His side of the divorce, and... Maybe there was on yours, BUT... In the cross and resurrection, Jesus puts away the sin done BY you, and He overturns the sin done TO you. The cross: "*He bore our sins in his own body on the cross,*" and when we believe He died for us, God transfers our sin to Jesus (1 John 1:9). The resurrection is God overturning the curse of death and destruction brought on by our sin and infusing the power of new life into the dead tomb of a broken heart. The empty tomb (the LIVING Jesus) is the answer for the empty soul ravaged by divorce. Maybe there's someone sitting here realizing you made a terrible mistake in that process; maybe you even committed terrible sins. You can't change that now, but the good news of the gospel is that those mistakes don't mean God is done with you or that He can't touch even that part of your life with blessing. Let me show you something awesome: In Matthew's recording of Jesus' genealogy, Matthew 1, he shows us that a number of the relationships in Jesus' ancestry were compromised. Sexual sins. Broken marriages. One of Jesus' great grandmothers was a former prostitute. And all these things were terrible and painful, and I'm certainly not making light of them. Yet out of all that mess, God brought Jesus. What's the point of that? One of those relationships Matthew points to as part of Jesus' ancestry is David and Bathsheba. Think about the

brokenness and tragedy surrounding that relationship. David sleeps with Bathsheba, then has her husband killed. You don't get more severe marital brokenness than that! Yet, after David repented, God not only forgave him, but God also brought forth from David and Bathsheba Solomon, and... From Solomon, ultimately would come the Messiah, Jesus. Tim Keller said: "What does that mean other than God is trying to say to all of us, 'I love redeeming the WORST situations. I love redeeming the HARDEST cases. Go ahead, try me.'" God can bring beauty and redemption even out of our biggest mistakes, IF we trust it to Him. You say, "Well, wait Pastor. But my spouse hurt me. BAD. And... They took from me some things I can never get back. It's not fair! They don't have to pay for their sin. They seem to have gotten off scot-free and it's hard for me to handle that. Is there no justice?" There is and I'm not trying to be lighthearted about your pain or the injustice that happened to you. How can we not think of Uriah in this situation? Uriah was Bathsheba's husband. Honorable and loyal, but then betrayed by David and murdered. Imagine, after all this has been done, Uriah has been murdered, from heaven he's watching things unfold on earth. And he's like, "God, wait... NO! You are blessing David and Bathsheba with Solomon? And... He gets to be an ancestor of JESUS? BUT... David slept with my wife and murdered me!" Perhaps God gave Uriah a vision of a mysterious Man hanging on a cross. And He says to Uriah, "That man on the cross is paying for David's sin against you. And your sin against Me, too." "Who is that suffering One on the cross, Lord? Who is it that will pay for sin?" And... God says, "That's Jesus, not just David's son, but MINE. He's the one who suffers for David's sin. And yours. And... After He dies for sin, I'm going to bring His dead body back to life to show that I can overturn every cursed thing for good. EVEN THIS! TAKE NOTE: In the cross, we find forgiveness for the sins done by us and healing for the ones done to us. In this part of our lives, as with all others, we can say: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved an [unfaithful] wretch LIKE ME; I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see. The Lord has promised good to me; His word my hope secures! He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures!"

**CONCLUSION.** Let me close with one more illustration. Which is better – one kidney or two kidneys? Typically, we'd say two – most are created with two and for good reason. Up until about 12 years ago I had two kidneys. In the months before I knew my right kidney was diseased, I could feel life leaving my body. Finally, a wise doctor called for a scan that indicated I had a very large mass in my right kidney. That cancer was sucking the life out of me. Another wise doctor, a surgeon, removed that kidney. Ask ME the question now – which is better – one kidney or two kidneys? The answer for me is easy – ONE kidney. If that ONE kidney hadn't been removed, I would not be standing here today. Two GOOD kidneys is best. Just ONE good kidney is better than a good kidney and a bad kidney. Worst is two bad kidneys. In summing this up – I think I can say once you are married, do what you can to stay married. For Diane and her legs, two legs are better than one. For me and my kidneys, one kidney is better than two when one is bad. For Diane, her doctor deemed that there was a chance her leg could be saved, and the choice was made TO TRY and save the leg. That was the right choice. HALLELUJAH! Diane still has her leg. For me, my doctor deemed that there was no saving my right kidney – the mass was too large. It was too late. At that point it was best that my one kidney be divorced – separated from my body. The story might have been different had my circumstances been properly diagnosed earlier. Sometimes we have to choose the lesser of two evils. I don't know where you are in your marriage. There are reasons that Paul and Jesus give for saving your marriage. HEED THOSE REASONS. There are also reasonable reasons that Paul and Jesus give to separate or divorce. Determining what is best is often considerably difficult – very difficult. God gave His Word to help, and there is also good godly counsel available. ALWAYS MAKE IT A MATTER OF PRAYER!