

WHY IS THE DIVORCE RATE SO HIGH?

By Denver Cheddie

Introduction

In the USA, 50% of people who say "I do" eventually change their minds. 1 in every 2 persons who vow to stay together "until death do us part" eventually say "I don't anymore". Now if that statistic only applied to those outside of the church, one could easily conclude that these people get divorced because they don't know Christ. But the rate of divorce is no different within the church. Even strong Christians whose lives are committed to God get divorced from their husbands or wives. Divorce has indeed reached epidemic proportions in the western world.

Some pastors deal with this problem by ministering comfort to those who have been divorced (which they should). But surely this is one area where prevention is better than cure. Very little effort is made to get to the root of the problem and to prevent people from getting divorced in the first place. I have a friend who saw his divorce as God's doing, for through it, he was able to draw closer to God. This may sound spiritual, but it is far from being so. Why would God separate what He has joined in order to draw us closer to Himself? Can't God come up with something better than that? This article attempts to answer the question why the divorce rate is so high and increasing, and what we could do about it.

In past generations, people were less likely to get divorced than they are now. In fact, even some couples who have been married for decades, get divorced. There are many people today, who one would think that had they lived in a previous generation or a different part of the world, they would not have got divorced. In western countries like the USA, getting a divorce is just as easy as getting dessert. Should I or should I not? It's too easy. And modern western culture does not make it any easier on family life either. Most jobs today require total devotion from their employees. Many employers indicate to you that if you are single, it makes it a lot easier for you to perform your job successfully because you don't have the weight of a family to worry about. Many wives complain that their husbands are workaholics. In which previous generation has this ever been a problem?

All of our technology and advancement have come at a severe cost. Family life have been sacrificed at the altar of "progress". This is all a strategy of the devil, and it is hard to fight against this trend, because not having a successful job often makes it difficult for one to get married in the first place, much less have a happy marriage. But I do believe that the God who is in us is greater than the prince of this world. And God is able to keep what he has joined together, the question is what is the key. What is the secret? Why do so many Christians get divorced and how do we ensure this doesn't happen to us?

Reasons for Divorce

Poor View of Marriage

One of the reasons the divorce rate is so high is that people have such a shabby view of marriage. Consider how many people actually go to Las Vegas to get married - with not even a thought of seeking God's blessing. Given the low esteem of marriage that this represents, is it surprising that so many of them get divorced? Many people stay in relationships with someone they don't love because they are afraid if they leave they will not find someone else. Then they get married. Guess what happens next. Considering how recklessly people venture into marriage, the divorce rate is not at all surprising. They seek no council from other older and wiser people. They are young and in love, and no one can tell them they are wrong.

Tendency to Blame Others

I have spoken to a few people who have been through divorces, and a few startling facts become evident. No one I've ever spoken to is ever at fault in a divorce. It is always the other person. Isn't it a hell of a co-incidence that I've always found myself speaking to the 100% innocent half of a divorced couple? I should play the lottery. Every one is always so quick to blame other people for their problems. They jump from relationship to relationship, and every single one of them end the same way, yet it is always the other person to blame. If they would only take a step back and look at their situation objectively, they would realize that there is one common denominator in all their problems. It is them. They are the only common factor in every failed relationship they have ever had. But it is easier to blame all women or all men. It is amazing how blind people are to their own faults.

Demanding Too Much

I've once heard a woman say, "I don't want to divorce my husband, but if he doesn't change, I have no choice." IF HE DOESN'T CHANGE! All of this while she was actively looking for someone else...while still married. But she is so perfect, she is entitled to demand perfection of others. Until she realizes that some of her ways need to change, men will always turn out to be dogs. All of her relationships will end the same way. One of the reasons people get divorced is that they demand and expect perfection of the other person. Once someone expects perfection from another human being, they will never fail to be disappointed. Then they will find themselves unhappy in their marriage, supposedly because the other person is not making them happy. There are some people who will not be happy, regardless of whom they marry.

No one will ever be perfect. But the happiest couples I know are the ones who've learned to grow together and learn together. Being a good husband or a good wife is not a skill people have instinctively. It's not something they are born with. It is something that is learned, as long as they are willing to learn. The happiest couples are the ones who have long recognized that the other person is not perfect, but they want to stay with them anyway, and grow and develop together. They want to stick this thing out and see where it takes them. Obviously as they go along, they become happier and happier because their abilities to be good spouses improves with time, age and experience. Compare this with most modern fast and furious relationships. Two people quickly fall so madly in love with each other that no one could tell them that they're wrong. Then as quickly as they fall in love, they fall into discontentment. Guilty of looking to the other person to provide them with happiness.

Selfishness

This leads to another reason why people get divorced. People are inherently selfish. **I** am not happy. I don't care about my spouse or my children, what about **ME**? Sure you need to look out for yourself, but people today look only after themselves. But that's human nature. The flesh is inherently selfish. Modern relationships consist of two people trying to take from each other as much as they could. When they realize that the other person could no longer give them what they want, they opt out. In Malachi 2, some men were divorcing their aged wives for younger supposedly more attractive women. This prompted God to reveal his hatred for divorce. When Jesus was asked why Moses permitted divorce, His answer was that God never intended for divorce to take place, except for the hardness of man's heart (Matt 19). Because men only think about themselves, and what's good for them as opposed to what's best for the other person.

Consider God's relationship to us. If God was ever concerned about what he could get out of us, do you think Jesus would have ever left his throne to die for us? We had absolutely nothing to offer God. God's coming to us was all about what He could give to us. Paul told men to love their wives just as Jesus loved the church and gave himself for it. We are to treat our spouses as we would treat ourselves (Eph 5). Does the average modern day marriage come even remotely close to this? Not in a long, long shot. Idealistic as this may sound, if two people are consumed with the idea of fulfilling the other person's needs, both their needs would be fulfilled. When people are more interested in giving than in receiving, they will be more blessed and their joy will be greater. When even one person is exhibiting this

behavior, it forces the other to reciprocate. But this is not intended to be a marriage manual.

The problem with people is that they put a greater emphasis on **happiness** than in **joy**. Happiness is a temporal emotion based on the circumstance of one's life or one's disposition. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, nurtured by being in the middle of God's will and being a channel of His love and grace to others. Ideally marriage is supposed to be about two people serving each other and loving each other as themselves.

Pettiness

Some people make excuses for their divorces. They claim incompatibility and irreconcilable differences as reasons. They claim that it's because of different personality types. There are even tests to determine whether two people are sexually compatible. Sexually compatible? We live in a society where men are considered sexually compatible with other men, and you mean to tell me that it is possible for a man and a woman to not be sexually compatible? And people believe this garbage. There is no such thing as an irreconcilable difference. There cannot be greater incompatibility than that between men and women in general, yet God intended it to work. There is no difference more irreconcilable than that between the genders, yet if that were a problem, then every marriage would fail. There is no difference that a couple cannot work through, as long as they don't demand perfection. Even as great an incompatibility as that between a believer and an unbeliever, Paul urges Christians to not be the ones to initiate divorce (1 Cor 7).

Laziness

These are just excuses people make to justify their actions. The real problem is that they are too lazy to work on their relationship. Relationships require work. I have a friend who says that the best way to know if two people are right for each other is for them to live together for a while to see how it works out. The truth is that if you are waiting for a relationship to just work out, prepare to be disappointed. Shouldn't that be obvious by now? Look at the world. One failed relationship after another. It's because people have no desire to work on their relationships. There are many good books on relationships, but none of them are useful if a couple isn't intent on making the marriage work.

I once heard a preacher say, "I have been married to the same woman for 27 years, and never did we once consider divorce. Murder perhaps, but never divorce." When people enter a marriage with that attitude, that no matter what, they would never ever let divorce be an option, that is the starting point for a successful marriage. But, one may ask, does that mean that we have to stay with each other even if we are not happy? To that I respond, would you be happy or happier if you got divorced? I say you would be happiest if you found a way to make the marriage work. But when you adopt the approach to marriage, that you would never ever consider divorce a viable option, it forces you into a position where you have to work on your problems in the marriage. As long as divorce is an option, there exists a breaking point where you would just throw in the towel. When no such breaking point exists, two people are more likely to work on their problems together. True happiness does not come from happy circumstances, but from knowing that no circumstance, happy or unhappy, could topple you.

The key to never getting divorced is to never get divorced. Divorce is not a thief that comes upon you in the night. It's a conscious decision that you could choose not to make. Forget temporal happiness. Make long term joy your goal. Create the legacy of a marriage that has overcome all that the devil had to throw at it. Make the marriage work AT ALL COSTS. It is God who joined you, you have his backing. This is His will.

Conclusion

My heart bleeds for people who have been divorced. I have friends who have been divorced, and God knows that I cannot even begin to comprehend their pain. However, this article was not intended to be an expression of my compassion. I tried to be as realistic as possible and as blandly honest and true to the facts as I could. Contrary to what my friend thinks, who claimed that God used his divorce to draw him closer to Himself, God does not need to put asunder what he has joined in order to draw us to himself. God could use the problems in the marriage to draw us closer to himself, and in turn draw spouses closer to each other.

This is my prayer for married people and for those contemplating marriage - that above all they would seek a closer walk with God. They would realize that there is no such thing as a happy marriage in and of itself. They have to make it a happy marriage by giving and serving the other person as a channel of God's love. That single people would realize the need for God's

direction and guidance to lead them into the right relationship and equip them more and more to be the men and women that God wants them to be. And most of all that God would give us resolve beyond our fast food generation, that we would not let anything, great or small, break up our marriages.

Are there problems in your marriage? Seek God. Seek council. Who knows whether God is using these problems to draw you to himself and in turn draw you and your spouse closer to each other? Who knows whether God, whose eye is on the sparrow, is just using these problems to bring you greater joy in the end if you would only endure? Who knows whether 10 years down the road, you would look back on these problems and fall on your knees thanking God that He gave you the strength to go through them for they only made your marriage better? The things we treasure most in life are the things we had to work hard to get, not the things we got for free.

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