

# Kingdom Living Today

*Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World*

## 41. God Hates Divorce!

**"ANYONE WHO DIVORCES HIS WIFE AND MARRIES ANOTHER WOMAN COMMITS ADULTERY, AND THE MAN WHO MARRIES A DIVORCED WOMAN COMMITS ADULTERY. IF A WIFE DIVORCES HER HUSBAND AND MARRIES ANOTHER MAN, SHE COMMITS ADULTERY."**

When the men had finished praying, Jack said, "I'm glad José asked for this meeting of us shepherds. He has a weighty matter that's shown up in his home fellowship family that we all need to discuss." Turning to José, Jack asked, "Why don't you explain the situation you've encountered in your fellowship family?"

Glancing around the table, the older man began, "Chris and Tracy are a couple who've been part of our fellowship family for some time. They came to me because they're all of a sudden talking about divorce after 20 years of marriage."

Jack gently stopped José. "We don't need to know any more details right now." Turning to the other shepherds, he asked, "Have any of you had any personal dealing with divorce? I don't mean that you know someone who got divorced, but that you were deeply involved in the situation." Only one other man had.

Jack went on, "Our Father has used me to help save a few marriage covenants over the years. But first I'd like you to be aware that most 'Christian counseling' has no biblical basis the way it's being practiced today." (1Corinthians 2:11-16) Some inquisitive looks surfaced. "Because of their psychological rather than biblical basis, counselors often allow each party to review what their spouse did wrong—and spewing *unforgiving accusations* often polarizes the conflict even more."

He paused for a moment then continued, "If you truly want to help a couple, they first need to understand that divorce is a *sin*—it's *breaking a covenant* pledged before God. Review HIS purpose for their marriage from the Bible's perspective. With this foundation you can help them recognize the sins against God and each other which the husband and/or wife has been committing which have resulted in them pursuing divorce." He then said with emphasis, "Divorce is always the result of unconfessed sins for which they haven't repented. In essence, one or both of them have *divorced themselves* from obeying God's commands—especially by not turning to Him in Spirit together to develop the humility and loved-based character of Jesus.

Ted summed it up. "So the dissolution of their marriage reveals in the physical realm what's been going on regarding their spiritual Covenant with our Father."

Then Bill added, "The most overriding point is that our Father intends a marriage covenant to be the *physical* representation of the *spiritual Covenant* He offers us through Jesus. After all, these two covenants are inseparably linked in God's sight! One reflects the other." He went on, "God wants our marriages to personify to the world what *living in covenant union* and *growing in increasing Christ-likeness* looks like." (John 17:20-23)

"Increasing Christ's likeness in our own marriages has sure been a chief focus among us shepherds," Bob noted. "That's what we've been laboring to instill among our faith families from hearts that love God and want to please Him." (Colossians 1:9,10)

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“To deceive others by claiming an intimate relationship with our Lord that people can’t see reflected in our marriage is hypocrisy,” Bob added resolutely.

José opened his Bible. “I know we need to pay particular attention to how intense our Father’s deep regard for the marriage covenant is, as well as *why* He established marriage in the first place.” He began to read slowly and purposefully: “*The LORD is acting as the **witness** between you and the wife of your youth, because you have **broken faith** with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your **marriage covenant**. Has not the LORD **made them one**? In flesh and spirit **they are His**. And why one? Because He was seeking **godly offspring**. So **guard yourself in your spirit**, and **do not break faith** with the wife of your youth. **‘I hate divorce,’** says the LORD God of Israel ... So **guard yourself in your spirit**, and **do not break faith**.” (Malachi 2:14-16)*

“Notice our Father’s further purpose for the marriage covenant: He was seeking *godly offspring* from people who are *His*,” Jack stressed.

José added another point. “I’ve also learned from research that the children of divorce have lifelong difficulty experiencing any kind of relational intimacy, and a hard time developing value-based relationships.” Tom broke in, “The majority of children of divorce are raised by single mothers, or by mothers who have remarried and their husbands are relatively uninvolved in raising her children. So the kids often suffer a sense of abandonment by their father.”

“I guess what I’ve seen,” observed Ted sadly, “is the kids who fall short on living uprightly because their guilt-plagued mothers have become their ‘friend’ or have given up on parental responsibilities. Parents who feel guilty may try to ‘purchase favor’ from their children by giving in to them. All this sounds like it could be God’s curse, the resulting consequence of broken marriage since He declares, *‘I hate divorce.’*”

Ken introduced another alarming outcome of divorce. “Even more staggering is that children who are under the age of 4 when their parents divorce and have no healthy male influence have a 75% higher chance of becoming homosexual when they mature than do kids raised with their father or with a stable father-figure like a grandfather, a coach or a caring uncle. I guess that’s another curse for violating God’s ways!” (For more on the effects of divorce on children, read *Discussing How To Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 33, or watch Segment 6 of the Home Section of *Jesus In Your Home* video)

“Ever since we all embraced the truths in *The Gospel of the Covenant*,” Bill noted, “each of us has come to recognize that our God doesn’t provide many options for getting a divorce.” He read aloud, “*‘I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.’*” (Matthew 19:9) My heart tells me that we shouldn’t make it any easier for the people in our care to pursue divorce than our Father does. The resulting curse on the children is too painful.”

“I agree completely. Adultery is the only allowable reason Christ gives for divorce. That’s because it defiles the marriage-covenant parallel of our relationship with Him as a spiritual bride just as surely as it defiles the ‘two becoming one’ image of earthly marriage,” interjected José emphatically. “That’s why God’s prophets so often used words against Israel like ‘prostitute’ and ‘adulterous, unfaithful people’—His people were bringing His name down by committing *spiritual adultery* with other gods!”

“And because divorce is so tolerated and unconflicted within Christendom today,” Jack sighed, “it’s tougher for shepherds who represent our Father’s concern

for His children to do our part—especially because the *sin* of divorce and the *consequences* of that sin don't seem to be of much concern for those pursuing divorce."

Bob's heart was determined. "We shepherds are here to serve people on behalf of our Father, and He never intended for couples to divorce—even if that's what was happening all around the pagan world back then and is so widespread today. It was Moses who permitted divorce because the Israelites' hearts were hard.<sup>(Mark 10:5)</sup> Let's hear *God's* perspective: *'In the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and **live in union** with his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'* So they are **no longer two, but one**. Therefore what **God has joined together, let man not separate.**"<sup>(Mark 10:6-9)</sup>

"Let not man separate," Jack reiterated. Surveying his brothers appreciatively he said, "While we could spend more time on God's view of and purpose for marriage, as well as other consequences of divorce, I think you guys collectively addressed the most crucial ones. Some other time we can discuss how our faith families can reach out to help the broken families around them as instruments of His grace and mercy."

José turned to Jack and asked, "So how do we proceed next?"

"Let's again look in God's Word. I have several halakhic applications you may want to consider regarding divorce, and please feel free to add, question, or disagree with anything I say. As always, we're looking for *what's* right according to our God, not *who's* right among us."<sup>(1Corinthians 2:12,13)</sup> Everyone agreed.

"When a spouse or a couple comes to you talking divorce," Jack continued, "they're pursuing *sin*, and their guilt for doing this must be established and repented of. The one who wants to *break the marriage covenant* is presumed guilty until further investigation reveals otherwise<sup>(Proverbs 18:17)</sup>: that the circumstances are so dire your spirit bears witness that the other person's unrepented sins make them guilty."

"We shepherds need to keep something in mind," Jack continued. "When someone violates God's Word, no matter what the sin is, their *guilt* must be established. They need to see their sin as *sinful*! Mercy over extenuating circumstances can be given afterwards when they've repented and been forgiven and cleansed."<sup>(1John 1:8,9)</sup>

"Isn't the refusal to accept their own guilt burden what keeps many people from repenting?" asked Bill rhetorically. "We men as followers of Jesus who are entrusted to lead are responsible for upholding communal righteousness. So our first goal is to help people repent of their sin, if they're willing."<sup>(1John 1:6,7)</sup>

Jack then asked the men to turn to Matthew, chapter 18. "Bill, would you read verses 15-18 aloud for us?" "If your brother sins, **go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the called-out ones; and if he refuses to listen even to the called-out ones, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"<sup>(Matthew 18:15-18)</sup>

Jack pressed on. "In light of this passage, your meeting with the couple must focus on determining if one or both of them has *sinned against God, and each other*. I encourage you to have your wife with you, José; she can greatly help expose the woman's motives. First uncover any sins, with each one taking responsibility for

their own sin and not accusing their spouse.<sup>(Matthew 7:3-5)</sup> Next, if you do discover sin in one or both of them, will they listen to you and repent? If one of them refuses to repent, you need to follow the rest of the steps in Matthew 18.”

“I bet that each one in this couple will want us to take *their side*,” José noted wryly.

“Yes, they’ll try!” Jack exclaimed. “But don’t let that happen. And don’t let yourselves get caught up with any resentment toward them. A study of Christian marriage counselors reveals that most of them first take the wife’s side. You need to *act justly* if you’re going to establish guilt and help them *repent* as the Spirit would have them do.”

“So we first need to establish whether there’s sin,” Ted said. “If guilt is established and they refuse to listen and repent, then they need to be removed from fellowship.”

“That’s correct,” Jack responded. “As Paul recommended, turn the unrepentant person over to Satan when you remove them from your fellowship family.<sup>(1Corinthians 5:5)</sup> The devil himself may expedite their repentance through pressure!”<sup>(1Timothy 1:20)</sup>

“What if one or both of them does repent—then what do we do?” Tom asked.

“Now you can help them experience from the Spirit the healing of their emotional wounds through God’s mercy,”<sup>(Psalms 147:3)</sup> Jack replied. “They need to *forgive each other* from the heart because God commands it.<sup>(Matthew 6:15)</sup> And make sure they get the ongoing help they need as our Lord heals their emotions.<sup>(James 3:17,18)</sup> This often takes time. And don’t be shaken by setbacks,” he cautioned. “Keep the couple focused on *our Lord* and on *His goal and purpose* for their marriage. Help them develop these as the framework of their covenant union to become more Christ-like!”

Ken added, “It seems like most interpersonal tension comes through recurring demonic strongholds,<sup>(Ephesians 6:12)</sup> or when ruts of old attitudes and behaviors haven’t been fully filled in according to God’s ways.”<sup>(Romans 8:12-14)</sup>

“That’s a good point to have a couple look into first,” Jack affirmed. “And be sensitive that there may be other contributing factors causing tension, like problems on the job, a man going through the Wounded Warrior stage, a pre-menopausal wife, rebellious kids, bitterness against *anyone*, or a whole host of other tension producers.”

“Jack, what about divorced people who want to enter our fellowship family?” Bill wondered. “I encourage you to talk with the person and thoroughly investigate their divorce,” Jack replied. “If that person was the guilty party who left their marriage, you need to help them repent and help them restore the marriage, if possible.” He then warned, “If you let in the guilty who *haven’t* repented, you’ll stymie your communal righteousness and your prayers will go unheard by our Father.”<sup>(1 Peter 3:12)</sup> Remember, the Holy Spirit will help your investigation.<sup>(John 16:7,8)</sup> He wants sin exposed and repented of so that forgiveness and cleansing can take place.”

Bill then asked, “What about divorced people who’ve remarried? Can they join our fellowship family?” Jack’s face turned serious. “You again need to investigate and use a lot of spiritual discernment in your fellowship family. Our God longs to be merciful to the repentant.<sup>(2John 6)</sup> And, divorce is *not* unpardonable sin!”

A grateful José shared, “I and my fellowship family now have a scriptural framework for this couple’s situation. I can see that God’s way of dealing with interpersonal tensions, including divorce, is *very redemptive*—it leads to *repentance*.”

With that, Jack concluded, “Keep in mind the authority God has given you and your fellowship family to *apply His Word* to all of life’s situations!”<sup>(Matthew 18:18-20)</sup>