

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is

SLIDE "Chris Bar" Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 7. 1 Corinthians 7. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet and literally Google search 1 Corinthians 7.

INTRODUCTION: STATS

So, we've been in this 1 Corinthians study since February, and for the last few weeks we've been on the topic of sexuality and relationships.

- And so, we've talked about sexual immorality,
- and then sex in marriage,
- and last week we talked about singleness.
- But now we come to the topic of divorce,
 - and this one is a really tough one.

You see, the percentage chance of you getting married at some point in your life are more than 80%ⁱ. So, that means that the vast majority of us will at some point be married. But, if you are married,

- 50% of those marriages will end in divorce,
- 60% of second marriages end in divorce,
- and 73% of third marriages end in divorce.ⁱⁱ
- And while the stats are slightly better for "practicing Christians"
 - they are still ominous.

One last stat to share just to get us all adequately depressed before we dig in, is that

- children of divorced parents are 35%
- more likely THEMSELVES to be divorced.ⁱⁱⁱ
- So, I have no idea how to do the math,
- but that coupled with the 50% divorce rate
- really puts the children of divorce in a statistically scary place.

ILLUSTRATION: MY STORY

And I don't say any of this from a situation devoid of personal experience. As I've shared before,

- both of my parents were divorced before they married each other.
- And then they divorced each other when I was in college,
- and are both remarried for the third time.

Now, I don't say that to throw my parents under the bus, because I love and have great relationships with both my parents. But I just point that out to say that I am not unscathed from this.

You see, when Maryse and I were engaged, one of the things that she was nervous about was the fact that I had seen divorce.

- It had been modeled to me.
- And really, there aren't even statistics for a guy like me
- who comes from divorce patterns like I do.

And so Maryse was worried, and rightly so, about those odds.

I am predisposed to run when things get tough.

EXPLAIN: WHY PREACH THIS?

Now, I haven't really preached on divorce before, and even as I got into this text, I felt some anxiety about it, because the reality is this:

I know many of you have this in your story, just like I do.

- And for you this isn't just a topic to philosophize on...
- but it's a hurt
- and a pain
- and a reality.

But one of the things we are committed to at Fathom Church is to preach all of God's Word, even the ones that are hard, and make us uncomfortable.

- So, if today brings up some pain
- and some scars
- and some questions,
- I'm gonna trust that God wants us to dig into this deeply,
- rather than play it safe.

It would actually be selfish of me to skip over this because it hurts and makes people uncomfortable or even upset with me.

But I also want to offer myself and the other elders to you as people to walk with you through past hurts or present struggles. If you need us, we are here for you. Just please reach out.

TRANSITION

So, here's what I want to do today: I want to address divorce from 1 Corinthians 7, and back it up from other biblical passages. And I'd like to address this as comprehensively as possible.

So, here's my outline:

- We'll look at God's view on divorce.
- Then we'll unpack the Biblical reasons for divorce.
- And finally, we'll talk about remarriage.

MOVEMENT 1: GOD'S VIEW ON DIVORCE

So, to begin, it's important, once again, to cover what the definition of marriage is, because most often when the New Testament talks about divorce, it is couched in the conversation of marriage. And remember, we talked about this a few weeks ago.

- Marriage, as defined by God,
- is one man
- and one woman
- for one lifetime.
- Period.
- That's marriage.

And Paul builds on that foundation in our text in 1 Corinthians verses 10-11. Look at that with me:

SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-11

[10] To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband [11] (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

EXPLAIN: GOD'S PLAN

So, God's plan, from the beginning, was that marriage would be permanent. One man, one woman, one lifetime. That was the intention.

- And in God's original plan for marriage,
- there was no need for,
- nor allocation for divorce.

But then, like we said a few weeks ago,

- Genesis 2 is followed by Genesis 3,
- and in the fall,
- when sin enters the cosmos,
- everything is broken,
- including marriage.

Genesis 2 marriage is one man, one woman, one lifetime.

But after Genesis 3 it gets more complicated.

And John Stott talks about divorce like this:

"There is almost no unhappiness so poignant as the unhappiness of an unhappy marriage, and almost no tragedy so great as the degeneration of what God meant for love and fulfillment into a non-relationship of bitterness, discord, and despair."

So then, when is it permissible to divorce? Are there ever occasions where Biblically, a person has grounds for divorce?

MOVEMENT 2: REASONS

Yes, there are. I think there are two biblical grounds for divorce. And we need to cover both. So, I'm going to read from Matthew 19 in Jesus' teachings on divorce.

SLIDE MATTHEW 19:3-9

[3] And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"

And just a side note, but a friend of mine says that **if you are looking for a reason to get a divorce, you will find as many reasons as you want to find.**

SLIDE [4] He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [6] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

So, right there Jesus is saying,

- *"let's go back to Genesis 2 marriage.*
- *Don't break what God has intended to stay united for an entire lifetime."*

SLIDE [7] They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” [8] He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

So, what’s being referred to here is found in Deuteronomy 24.

- But the Pharisees are like,
 - *“Well, Moses commanded us to divorce,”*
- and Jesus is like,
 - *“Wait, wait, wait...”*
 - *Moses allowed it...*
 - *he didn’t command anything.”*
- And really, what had happened,
- Was that divorce was just happening for whatever reason,
- and it was putting women of the time in a horrible position,
- so, Moses was just putting some boundaries around it
- so that a divorced woman was not left without any legal rights.

SLIDE [9] And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

EXPLAIN: ADULTERY

So, what is the first biblical reason for divorce? Based on Matthew 19, Jesus gives one: ADULTERY.

- If your spouse cheats on you,
- they are effectively breaking the covenant,
- separating what God has joined together.

Now, I want you to notice that the Pharisees believe that divorce is commanded in certain circumstances, but **Jesus on the other hand, seems to make this as a concession, not a command.**^{iv}

- Ongoing, unrepentant sexual immorality
- breaks the ‘one-flesh-ness’ of marriage
- to the point where divorce is permissible...
- but it is not required.

And I would plead with you to take every single possible step to save and reconcile a marriage, even if there has been sexual immorality, because Jesus can and does heal even these types of wounds.

ILLUSTRATION: CUT IT OFF

It’s like this: when I was a kid, and I would hurt myself, I’d cry and wail, and dad would come to comfort me.

- And he would always start with a joke.
- He’d say: *“Oh my...that injury looks bad.*
- *I think we might need to cut that leg off!”*
- And through the tears and snot I’d laugh,
- and say, *“Nooooo!”*
- And then he’d clean my injury,
- And wrap it up,
- and wipe away my tears.

Listen, even if you have a very serious broken bone, or infection, or whatever...the first move is never to amputate.

- It might come to that,
- but only as a last resort.

And I would implore you to that mentality, even with sexual immorality in a marriage.

- It might be a long, hard recovery from that injury,
- but I would counsel against amputation unless it is a last resort.

TRANSITION

So, ADULTERY is one biblical reason for divorce. A second biblical reason for divorce is ABANDONMENT.

And this one is from our text today. So, let's look back at 1 Corinthians 7, verse 12:

SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 7:12-14

[12] To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. [13] If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. [14] 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.

EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

Now, remember what's going on in Corinth here for a second.

- This church is maybe 5-years-old,
- and previously, there were no Christians in Corinth.
- So, Paul is likely addressing this scenario:
 - the Gospel comes to Corinth,
 - one spouse becomes a Christian,
 - the other does not.

Now, biblically, Christians are NEVER supposed to marry someone who does not believe in Jesus. This is the principle of being equally yoked, and I don't have time to go into it this morning, but it's MASSIVELY important.

- But in this case in 1 Corinthians,
- they were most likely equally yoked as unbelievers,
- got married,
- one of them got saved,
- and then the unsaved spouse says,
 - *"Hey, I didn't sign up for this whole Christian thing,*
 - *so, I'm outta here."*

And Paul's response to that is in verse 15:

SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 7:15-16

[15] But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. [16] For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

EXPLAIN: ABANDONMENT

So, if your unbelieving spouse wants a divorce...you cannot stop them. That is what we call ABANDONMENT.

- But if you are the believer in that relationship,
- God does not give you permission to divorce your spouse
- just because they are not a Christian,
- because, Paul says, **“How do you know whether you will save your husband or wife?”**

EXPLAIN: EXHAUSTIVE?

So, biblically, Jesus gives allocation for divorce on the grounds of ADULTERY, and Paul adds a concession for divorce on the grounds of ABANDONMENT.

Now, the question is: do these teachings cover every conceivable situation in which divorce could reflect God’s permissive will? Well, let me quote one of my seminary professors, Dr. Craig Blomberg:

“Obviously, Jesus’ teaching was not exhaustive or Paul could not have added to it. ... Cautious interpreters, therefore, have suggested additional extreme situations in which divorce may be the least evil of several options. It is probably best not to add to the biblical list, however, but simply to treat other cases one at a time, asking if the marriage has in reality been as fundamentally destroyed as if sexual unfaithfulness or irrevocable abandonment had occurred.”^v

So, it would seem that there are other, extreme situations, but that they are, again, last options.

None of this is to be entered into lightly. Amputation is never the first option.

But I will say this,

- if you are in an abusive marriage,
- you need to get out of physical contact with your abuser.
- I am not saying that divorce is your only option,
- but I am saying that you need to,
- first, get safe,
- and second, get the help you need.

So, these are the biblical reasons for divorce.

MOVEMENT 3: REMARRIAGE

Finally, let's talk about remarriage. Because back to 1 Corinthians 7:11, Paul seems to indicate that there are certain circumstances where remarriage is not proper.

And Jesus, back in Matthew 19:9 says that

- an unbiblical divorce,
- followed by remarriage,
- amounts to adultery.

So, let's talk about remarriage, and try to address a couple questions.

SINGLE?

First, if you are divorced and single, is it ok to remarry?

- Well, remember back to what we said last week...
- your singleness,
- even if you got there by way of sin,
- is a gift from God
- for you to display the glory of God
- and to build up the church.
- So, strive to find contentment in your singleness.

Now, maybe you are realizing your divorce was unbiblical, and you have some repenting to do.

- You might need to confess,
- repent,
- and turn from your sin,
- just like you would any sin.

And hear me, an unbiblical divorce is not an unpardonable sin. But if you realize you have sinned, you need to repent, and begin to live by God's standards.^{vi}

- Maybe there is remarriage in your future, maybe not.
- But your hope for a fulfilled life is not in remarriage...
- your hope for fulfillment is in Christ alone.

Now, where God does give concession for divorce, he also gives concession for remarriage...

- but I am hesitant to give a sweeping,
- black-and-white,
- blanket statement on when it's permissible
- and when it's not...
 - for the very same reason I mentioned earlier
 - when covering extreme situations
 - in which divorce is allowable.

Remarriage is something that really needs to be taken on a case-by-case matter.

- Cause some of you had a biblical reason for your divorce...
 - and you should remain single.
- While others divorced problematically,
 - but maybe God has remarriage for you.

It's just not simple, and it reminds me of why

- you need to be an active part of a church.
- You need people around you to help you in this.
- You need leaders who you've submitted under
 - to help guide you.

REMARRIED?

Second, if you are divorced and remarried, and today you're like,

- *“uh oh...*
- *Jesus said if I get divorced*
- *and then remarried then it's adultery...*
- *so, what about us?”*

Well, I'd say the same thing to you as to the single divorcee:

- Where do you need to confess?
- Where do you need to repent?
- And just like with any sin,
 - if there is genuine repentance
 - God is faithful to restore and forgive.

But I can't find in the Bible any place where it says that breaking a second marriage will somehow fix the first one.

So, again, confess, repent, and begin to live by God's standards.

CONCLUSION

Now, let me end with this: in John chapter 4 we find a story

- of Jesus coming to a well in the heat of the day, at about noon.
- And a Samaritan woman came to draw water.
 - Now, the fact that she came at noon
 - meant that she was a woman of disrepute.

But Jesus strikes up a conversation with her, and says this in John 4:13

SLIDE JOHN 4:13-18

[13] Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” [15] The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.”

[16] Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” [17] The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

You know what I love about this?

- I love that Jesus doesn't downplay the most painful,
 - embarrassing,
 - dirty part of her life.
- He doesn't placate her.
- He doesn't excuse her sin.
- He doesn't pretend it didn't happen.
- No, he takes her shame head-on.
- **And makes her a better offer than her sin could ever produce!**

Church, this is the Jesus who we love and serve.

- To us in our brokenness, he says *come*.
- To us in our sinfulness, he says *come*.
- To us in our guilt and our shame, he says *come*.
- Wherever you are today, Jesus says,
 - *“come, and I will give you living water,*
 - *and you will never be thirsty again.”*

Sex, marriage, divorce, remarriage...none of those things will satisfy.

You'll still be thirsty.

- But Jesus has water for you
- that will become a spring of water
- welling up to eternal life.

Will you come?

Let's pray.

COMMUNION

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- First, every week we celebrate communion—The Lord’s Supper—
 - We take a little bit of bread and juice, two common elements given to us by Jesus to represent his body and blood sacrificed for us.
 - When we eat and drink, we are remembering his sacrifice, and proclaiming once again that we believe in him as our Lord and Savior.
 - If you are a Christian here today please get your communion elements ready, as we’ll all take communion together.
 - If you are NOT a Christian, we ask you to abstain from taking communion, as this ordinance means you are a believer...and you are welcome at Fathom even if you are not.
- Second, we normally give of our tithes & offerings as a community. And this is still needed.
 - Church, even though we are not meeting physically, we are still practicing first fruits giving.
 - We give our first and our best because in Christ Jesus God gave us his first and his best.
 - So, if Fathom is your home church, and you regularly give in the offering boxes, please go to **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/give or click the link at the top of the screen marked “Give” and give online.

- Third, the staff and elders are here to pray for you, and we are committed to continue this. So, if you have any prayer needs, please click on the screen and submit a prayer request, or go to **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/prayer
- And finally, we always end with singing praise and worship to our God. Singing is an unbelievably important part of our gathering, and even as we are scattered in this season, let's continue to worship through song together.

So, I'm going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we'll take communion, and then we'll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

SLIDE Communion 1

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **TAKE**

SLIDE Communion 2

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **TAKE**

SLIDE Communion 3

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let's sing together.

BENEDICTION/REOPENING ANNOUNCEMENT

Well, thanks church for gathering with us.

So, I mentioned in the weekly newsletter that I had some MAJOR news to share about reopening...so, here it is: **we have been given permission from the Colorado Department of Public Health to reopen our physical gatherings!**

I hope there's some major celebrating in that chat room right now!

So, here's the plan:

- Next Sunday, June 14th, we will still be online, but we will be testing a true live-stream instead of a pre-recorded service. We want to continue to offer streaming services for anyone unable or not ready to come to a physical gathering yet. During next week's stream we will be giving detailed procedures we are using for reopening, so you'll want to log in next week.
- And then on Father's Day, June 21st, 105 days since we last gathered physically at the Main Street Center, we will have our first live services and we'll continue our online stream.

So, that's super exciting. Please be praying for all the details to come together, and look in your inbox for more information on the reopening process, because we need some help from you as well!

Alright church, I'll leave you with this benediction from the Gospel of Matthew:

SLIDE MATTHEW 11:28–30

[28] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Love you, church. Have a great week!

ⁱ <https://www.thedailybeast.com/will-i-ever-get-married-15-signs-youll-tie-the-knot>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.jacksonwhitelaw.com/arizona-family-law/what-year-of-a-marriage-is-divorce-most-common/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.owenbylaw.com/blog/2018/october/statistics-children-divorce/>

^{iv} Carson D.A. *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount*.

^v Blomberg, Craig. *From Pentecost to Patmos*.

^{vi} Osborne, Grant. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*.