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Why Christians Should Not Divorce

One of the more disturbing trends in recent years is the rise in divorces occurring in our country. Some estimate as many as 50 percent of marriages in the United States now end in divorce. Even more disturbing is the number of professing Christians who are divorcing their spouses. Many who attend church services regularly—even ministers—are divorcing their spouses and remarrying others. In contrast to what many in evangelical churches are doing today, the Bible forbids divorce with the exceptions of sexual infidelity and abandonment. This is clearly seen in the teaching of Jesus and Paul. The prohibition against divorce is based upon the fact that God's intention from the beginning has been for a man and a woman to "become one flesh" when they marry, remaining together until death.

When discussing divorce from a biblical standpoint, the logical starting point is the creation of humans and the institution of marriage. Having created Adam, God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen 2:18 NKJV). From among the animals which Adam named "there was not found a helper comparable to him" (v. 20). So God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, and formed Eve (vv. 21-22). Adam then called her "Woman, Because she was taken out of Man" (v. 23). In verse 24, we are given a concise description of God's plan regarding marriage: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." When questioned about divorce by the Pharisees (Matt. 19:3), Jesus quoted this verse (v. 5) and said, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (v. 6). It is clear that when God created Eve from Adam's rib, He fully intended for the man and the woman to remain joined together by an inseparable bond. This then is the Lord's perfect will for all marriages: that the husband and wife would love Him and each other, and that they would serve Him together.

As one familiar with the biblical foundations of marriage might expect, Jesus takes a strong stance against divorce. In addition to Matthew 19, which was mentioned above, Jesus says this in His Sermon on the Mount: "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any

reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery" (Matt. 5:32). Jesus forbids divorce, mentioning only one exception—that of sexual immorality, that is, the infidelity of one's spouse.

In perfect continuity with the teaching of Christ, Paul is decidedly against divorce. He says, "A wife is not to depart from her husband . . . And a husband is not to divorce his wife" (1 Cor. 7:10-11). If one does divorce, that individual must remain single or be reconciled with the divorced spouse (v. 11). If a Christian man has an unbelieving wife, or if a Christian woman has an unbelieving husband, and the unbelieving spouse is willing to remain married, the Christian spouse must not divorce the unbelieving spouse (vv. 12-14). However, if the unbelieving spouse wishes to depart and divorces the believing husband or wife, the Christian is free to remarry (v. 15). Thus it may be seen that Paul, like Jesus, is not at all in favor of divorce. He gives only one additional exception not mentioned by Jesus: abandonment by an unbelieving spouse.

To summarize, it is not God's will that Christians divorce their spouses. This is clear from Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:3-6; it is clear from the teaching of Jesus and Paul. Instead of accepting the fact that many marriages are failing, Christians should realize the great importance of marriage in God's eyes. Truly realizing the value and importance of strong Christian marriages, believers can find biblical ways to strengthen their own marriages as well as the marriages of those around them.

<div align="center">Christians in the Secular Workplace</div>

Since many—in fact most—Christians spend much of their time working in secular places of employment, Christianity in the secular workplace is an important subject, which is well worth discussing. It is also true, however, that this vital aspect of daily Christian living often has been neglected or ignored. In light of this, it becomes all the more important to analyze the relationship between Christianity and the workplace. Such an evaluation will, of course, need to address both advantages and disadvantages of Christianity in the workplace.

To begin with, there are the advantages for the employer. Regardless of the size of the company, whether a small family-owned business or a large corporation, there are certain

advantages to having employees who habitually practice biblical principles in their daily lives. First of all, employees who integrate spirituality into their professional lives are more productive. An article in The Plain Truth reports, "stress is a common factor in nearly all places of work. Many feel a need to reintegrate the spiritual into their professional lives" (Wolverton 1998, 2). The article goes on to say:

> From a corporate standpoint, stressed, disillusioned workers cost more in health care and decreased productivity. Virtually anything that reduces stress and increases productivity is attractive to management, so an increasing number of corporations are finding it in their best interest to allow some spirituality in the workplace. Simply providing a room for a lunchtime prayer group is an inexpensive alternative to morale-building seminars or sick leave. (2)

As can be seen, employees who integrate the practice of biblical principles such as prayer into their professional life are of great benefit to their employers. This is true because such employees are more productive. Furthermore, "employees who practice genuine Christianity are a valuable asset" to their employers because they are "excellent workers who are genuinely concerned about their jobs, companies and coworkers" (Wolverton 1998, 2). Such conscientiousness is the result of the Christian's understanding of biblical principles regarding love of others, honesty, integrity, and hard work.

Additionally, there are advantages for the Christian who is working a secular job. While Christians sometimes complain about working secular jobs, this is actually to their advantage. This is true because working in a mostly non-Christian environment gives believers great evangelistic opportunities. For seven years, I sat under the ministry of a pastor who often spoke of how he missed the opportunities for evangelistic work that came his way when working a secular job. Many other believers have found their secular jobs to be evangelistically fruitful. A non-Christian environment presents the Christian with an opportunity consistently to demonstrate genuine Christianity to unbelievers over a prolonged period of time. Furthermore, even hardships and persecutions, which may occur at work, can be beneficial if responded to correctly. The purpose of such trials and persecutions, according to the Apostle Peter, is "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:7).

Unfortunately, there are also disadvantages for the Christian who works in a secular workplace. One such disadvantage is that the Christian will sometimes become discouraged as a result of an environment that is sometimes hostile toward Christianity. Peggy Wehmeyer, who worked for a number of years as a religion correspondent with ABC World News Tonight, says conservative Catholics and Evangelical Christians "are the most acceptable groups for the East Coast media to despise and marginalize" (Lovell 2008, 2). She admitted that when others in the news industry were hostile toward Christianity, she "was sometimes sad, . . . and discouraged at so little understanding or tolerance for different ideological points of view." She goes on to say, "On my weaker, less heroic days, I felt wounded and discouraged and frustrated about my inability to accomplish all I dreamed to do with this beat, the religion beat" (2-3). Many Christians can identify with such feelings of discouragement coming from a non-Christian or even anti-God work environment.

The most serious disadvantage for the Christian in secular work is that of persecution, however. Second Timothy 3:12 states, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Such persecution sometimes comes in the workplace. As Dr. Carl S. Parnell has noted, an anti-Christian bias seems to be present in many "tolerance and diversity" policies, which an ever-increasing number of companies are instituting (Parnell 2008, 1). However, Christians who find themselves discriminated against or persecuted in the workplace can find comfort in the words of Jesus: "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world . . . the world hates you" (John 15:18-19).

In conclusion, it may be said there are both advantages and disadvantages associated with Christianity in secular places of employment. Having Christian employees is greatly beneficial for the employer, so long as these employees are true followers of Jesus Christ who follow biblical principles in their daily lives. On the other hand, for Christians who make their living in a secular workplace it may be personally either advantageous or disadvantageous. The benefits

for such a person include increased opportunities to fulfill the Great Commission and character

development. Disadvantages include possible discouragement and persecution.

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