

THE LAST WORD



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The Deception of Divorce

I've just hung up the phone after talking to the aged mother of a young minister whose wife had filed for divorce. The old woman was crying. Great, convulsive sobs. "But what will become of those two precious grandchildren?"

She doesn't understand. Neither do I.

The minister admits he's done wrong and wants to change. His wife, however, is determined to leave and take the children—regardless of who else is hurt.

It's a sad situation.

Sometimes it's easier to face death than divorce—so great is the pain.

Over the last three years four of my good friends in the ministry have gone through divorce. In two cases the husbands said they were "led by God" to get the divorce. Each, however, was also involved with another woman.

Another, a woman evangelist, left her husband because he "slowed her down."

Now this.

Maybe it would not be so painful if Jackie and I had not struggled with this years ago—and opted to stick it out. I gave her all the legal reasons needed. But to her, divorce was no more a valid option than murder. Now, after 30 years of marriage, we are living proof God redeems and salvages those who hang in there.

But all society—and a growing number of Christians—believe otherwise. A newspaper ad showed a smiling couple side-by-side saying, "Why spend so much money on divorce? Our lawyer, Mr. _____, helped us through divorce for only \$200."

What the ad didn't show was the weeping children. And the old, heartbroken grandmother.

Granted, there are times when divorce is the only answer out of a miserable situation. But in most situations all it does is create a new set of problems—like drinking whiskey to cure depression.

Divorce, you see, always involves others. Many others. Last Sunday the little son of my divorcing friends was crying in Sunday school. He told his teacher, "My mommy doesn't love my daddy any more."

Now this morning I have just heard another pathetic sound—the breaking heart of a lonely, old woman who has lost her family, too.

Divorce has the same effect on the Body of Christ as the death of an endangered species has on earth's ecology. Something God intended to be has died. With it the entire Kingdom dies a little bit, too.

The Census Bureau reports there are now 13.7 million children under 18 years old living with one parent because of divorce—compared to 8.2 million 10 years ago. Nine out of 10 of these children live with their mother—out from under the covering of

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their natural daddy.

Divorce does more than force millions of youngsters to choose between Mommy and Daddy—a choice they should never, never, never have to make. It also deprives the children of that God-given right of growing up in a family with grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles.

All because one or both parents are too damned selfish to care.

It's sheer madness.

My secretary's brother called from Chicago. Married 30 years, he is divorcing his wife. But he did the "decent" thing. He waited until all the children were grown before walking out. But he doesn't seem to realize he has not only cast his wife adrift, he has cut the moorings which tied his children and generations of children to come to a rich family heritage.

That's why I weep with that old grandmother. Call me narrow. Old fashioned. But I believe when God told wives to obey their husbands He knew what was best for the family. When He said husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the Church, I think He meant a man should stay with his wife forever—and die for her if necessary.

I do not have a solution. The issue is far too complex for easy answers. And just last week I participated in the wedding for a divorced friend. But that does not keep me from saying that God hates divorce.

The Church needs to sound a fresh trumpet and fight divorce like we fight cancer—as the enemy of God. We need to make it as hard as nails for a Christian to obtain a divorce—and allow it only after all other doors are closed.

If divorce does take place, the Church then has a healing ministry. It should reach out to those deeply wounded in battle—and accept them into the fold. But even as it ministers to the divorcee, it should never lower the standard. God's best plan is for husbands and wives to work out their problems and stay married.

To say it isn't possible is to limit God.

And that is the deception of divorce. ↪