“Is Lust Justification for Divorce?”

I have a question. In Matthew 5:27ff. Jesus says that if a man lusts after a woman he has already committed adultery in his heart. Then, in v. 32 Jesus indicates that sexual immorality is the only justification for divorce. Is, then, lust justification for divorce? If so, what degree of lust is justification for divorce? Or, if it is not Jesus’ intention to allow divorce for lust, please substantiate this position. Thanks.

Good question!

The bottom line answer to your question is no, lust is not grounds for divorce.

If you look at the context of the Lord Jesus’ remarks about lust in Matthew 5, what you see is that He is “pulling back the rug,” so to speak, on outward sins to expose the underlying problem, which is sin in the heart. Murder doesn’t start with murder; it starts with sinful anger in the heart (vv. 21-22). Don’t be as concerned about the proper words in taking an oath; be people of such integrity that your simple word alone will suffice and no oath is necessary (vv. 33-37). Instead of carefully measuring the retaliatory consequences of an offense against you, give in and don’t fight back (vv. 38-42). Instead of loving your neighbor and hating your enemy, love your enemies and pray for them (vv. 43-44).

The main point to all of these illustrations in the Sermon on the Mount is that a sinful heart lurks behind every offensive action. By shining the light of His perfection on our dark hearts, the Lord very effectively makes us aware of how short we fall of God’s standard of righteousness. That’s why we need to receive Christ’s righteousness, since we have none of our

own.

So the point about lust is made to expose the sinful motives of the heart, showing that even before one actually enters into an adulterous relationship, there's a heart problem that's just as serious in God's eyes as acting on it.

But if the Lord had meant to set lust as an acceptable ground for divorce, He would have said so. He doesn't play games with us to keep us guessing about what pleases Him. Personally, this makes sense to me, since a person can fall into the sin of lust for another person, and repent and receive forgiveness, without his/her spouse ever getting hurt. They don't ever need to know about it; it's a internal war of the one struggling with lust. As sinful creatures, we are going to struggle with various sins all our lives. But there's still a big difference *in consequence* between fighting the internal battle against the sin nature and going out and *acting* on it.

Furthermore, engaging in sexual immorality is an external act that can be proven by witnesses and/or testimony. Experiencing lust is internal, and can only be judged by another without any proof. Only God can know whether someone truly lusts or not. Kind of hard to hold up in a court of law!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"How Do We Deal With Our

Son’s Long Hair at Church?”

I have a teenage son who is wearing his hair long, just to the top of his shirt collar. He is an awesome son who loves God and witnesses along his daily walk in life. I have heard people at church say things to other kids like “If you don’t get your hair cut you’re going to look like _____.” And one parent even told their son “I don’t want you hanging around with the crazy long hair boy.” He has even heard things himself. I know him better than most, because he is my son. How do we as parents handle this within our church? I feel like everyone is looking to us to make him cut his hair. Are we as a Christian family setting a wrong example? I know God looks at the heart.

Well, I write this to you as the mom of a former teenager who came to church one Sunday with his hair not only long but GREEN . . . when my husband was chairman of the board of elders!

There are certain areas where it’s safe for our kids to display the fact that they are different and distinct from us, and hair is one of those areas. It’s not a moral issue, it’s not a character issue, it’s a cultural issue. When you can see that his heart is good and that he loves the Lord, the hair thing just doesn’t matter. . . because in a few years he will choose differently, I’ll bet.

If I were in your shoes, I would not say anything to the other people in your church because it really isn’t any of their business. And if they said something to me, I would smile and say, “You know, it’s not the way I would choose for him to wear his hair, but we’re so proud of his heart and his character that it just outshines the length of his hair. We’d rather have a son with long hair who walks with the Lord than a son with short hair who ignores Him.”

And then tell yourself that it’s unfortunate that the people in your church are being judgmental and shallow, because they are.

For what it’s worth,

Sue Bohlin

P.S. The Lord took care of the hair thing with our son in time. . . he developed severe male-pattern baldness while in college. He’s now completely bald on top and, since he’s in the Air Force, it’s shaved WAY short.

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“What Does the Bible Say About Donating Eggs for In Vitro Fertilization?”

A friend is considering giving some of her eggs to another woman to have a baby. Is this a moral issue? What does the Bible say about such a thing?

There is indeed a moral concern with donated gametes. Though some have expressed concern as to whether this can be constituted as adultery, I believe this term is best left for the physical act itself.

The relevant biblical passages are first Genesis 2:24, which introduces the concept of “one flesh.” Many scholars describe children as an expression of a couple becoming one flesh. Even

if this specific connection is not accepted, it is clear that a third flesh has been introduced into the marriage relationship with donated gametes, either eggs or sperm. In my mind this is the most pressing moral issue.

A second related passage is Genesis 16 and the story of Hagar and Ishmael. In a sense, Sarai "borrows" Hagar's eggs to give Abram an heir when she has failed to do so herself. Though God respects and saves Hagar and Ishmael, the union is not blessed by God and Abram's promised heir is still to come through Sarai later. Also note the emotional trauma this arrangement causes Sarai, Hagar and Abraham. The emotional issues cannot be overlooked. The egg donor will understandably feel a special kinship with the resulting child; after all, she is the genetic mother. This could easily put a strain on the marriage in which the child is raised that can be difficult to anticipate.

I would not counsel the acceptance or donation of either sperm or egg.

A helpful resource on these questions is a series of booklets put out by the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity called the *BioBasic Series.* They have three additional booklets covering suicide, end of life issues, and alternative medicine. Each is offered in a question and answer format. You can purchase them through the Center at www.cbhd.org. I am co-authoring a booklet in the next round of four on genetic engineering. I hope the next four will be released within 2002.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“My Racist Parents Disapprove of My Boyfriend”

I am a Christian. I have had a boyfriend for almost three years. He is a wonderful guy…inside and out. He is a strong Christian and we have great chemistry and are very like-minded in our habits, finances, etc. I love him very, very much.

The only thing is that we are an interracial couple… with him being Chinese-American and me being white. There are some cultural differences in that his family depends on him for support….and that worries me. (That in the future, he will never leave his family so we can start our own family.)

Also, he loves his mother and sister dearly and I feel that he compares me to them…which I can never meet up. I can’t help but to feel jealous for the way he loves and puts his sister on a pedestal. I compare myself to her frequently and it is killing my confidence.

Furthermore, my parents (they are non-Christians) strongly disapprove of our relationship because of his race.

I guess my questions are: 1) What does the bible say about interracial dating/marriage and 2) Should I obey my parents or give in to their racism?

I am just overwhelmed and have lost myself in all these problems. I know God will keep us together if it is in His will…but I could really use some godly truth and insight to all these things. Can you offer some insight into my problem?

The Bible makes distinctions between two kinds of people: believers and non-believers. It says nothing about interracial marriages. We have an article on that here:

www.probe.org/what-does-the-bible-say-about-interracial-marriages/

Obeying your parents is a command for children. Once we become adults, we are commanded to *honor* our parents. The difference is that once we're adults, we take our direction directly from God. We honor, not obey, our parents by listening to what they say and seriously considering it, and then doing whatever God leads us to do.

However, the cautions you express about your relationship are very serious and should be explored even if your parents were 100% for your marriage. You not only have a cultural difference, you have a situation where your boyfriend's relationship with his mother and sister could very well be more important than his relationship with you. That's why Gen. 2:24 (later re-emphasized by Jesus Himself) says that a man should leave his mother and father (both physically and emotionally) and cleave (i.e., stick like Superglue) to his wife. If a man's primary emotional connection is to his family of origin instead of his wife, the marriage will be in trouble from day one.

You need to have a very frank talk with him about his emotional priorities. It may well be that this is a matter of your perception and not his reality, because of your own insecurities. If you fight jealousy and insecurity NOW, there's a good chance it will only get worse. That's a part of finishing growing up that you need to deal with before you marry anyone, but spend some time finding out who you are and what your strengths and "gift package" are so that you are content with YOU. If you're content with yourself and able to accept yourself, you won't waste emotional energy comparing yourself with others.

One other thing: if your boyfriend's emotional warmth toward his mother and sister is actually healthy and he would truly have no problem putting you first, then the fact that he has a

good relationship with them is a good thing. It's when men are hostile and disrespectful toward female relatives that there is a red flag. (The other red flag is when a man bonds more with his female relatives than with his male relatives.)

I would suggest that you spend more time talking to him about this, especially your fears that he will never leave his family so you can start your own. There are many, many forces against marriages today. If you get married knowing that both families are not in agreement, you are adding a huge amount of stress to your relationship, because I can verify after 28 years of marriage that you don't just marry a person, you marry a family.

You need to read some good books on Christian marriage: FamilyLife.com is a wonderful resource.

In the wise words of Dr. Laura, sometimes love just isn't enough.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

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