“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

"Abortion Isn't Your Decision

to Make For Others”

You assume your belief in the bible is the truth. If you disregard that book of stories to live by, then the arguments of right and wrong are invalid.

Now if your points against abortion were based on your feeling of terminating a life, not what you are told in a book then I would have much more respect for your point of view.

For those who feel abortion is wrong…. good for them, they have that choice… others choosing to have an abortion will deal with it.

It’s not your decision to make for others. You must understand that we all don’t subscribe to your beliefs… and that’s the great thing about our country, we are free to do as we feel right based on our upbringing.

I hope I have not misinterpreted your writings on this web page.

Thanks for writing about my abortion article at the Probe Ministries site.

> *You assume your belief in the bible is the truth. If you disregard that book of stories to live by, then the arguments of right and wrong are invalid.*

Yes, I do assume that the Bible is true. Just as you assume that your beliefs are true. I used to dismiss the Bible as a fanciful “book of stories to live by,” but after I found out how unusual it is, how incredibly consistent it is internally even though written by scores of authors on four continents within a span of thousands of years, I came to the conclusion that it was actually quite a miraculous book, inspired by God, and worth my trust.

If we disregard the Bible, which claims to be God's communication with us, then why even talk about issues of right and wrong? Without God in the picture, who says there IS a right and wrong? Without God, the universe just IS. No meaning, no purpose—and certainly no right and wrong.

> *Now if your points against abortion were based on your feeling of terminating a life, not what you are told in a book then I would have much more respect for your point of view.*

So, if I based my position against abortion on feelings alone, you could respect that. . .but since I base my position on what I completely believe to be God's revealed truth, it's fluff? Feelings are a dangerous basis for opinions; they often have nothing in common with reality. How do you know that that $20 bill in your wallet is actually worth $20? Somebody told you it was, right? Does that make that belief invalid? But if you use that bill to buy $20 worth of merchandise, a store will accept that money. That's because it corresponds to reality. I believe that my position on abortion—regardless of where I got those beliefs—also corresponds to reality. The question that ought to be asked about my position is not "where did you get it," but "is it true?"

> *It's not your decision to make for others. You must understand that we all don't subscribe to your beliefs… and that's the great thing about our country, we are free to do as we feel right based on our upbringing.*

I'm sorry, where did you read that I make a decision for anyone else? I state that abortion is wrong because God says that it's wrong. I state that abortion is hurtful because that's what experience teaches us. That's a long way from stopping someone from having an abortion. You are more than free not to subscribe to my beliefs; but why would you challenge my right to hold them? I don't know how you ended up

at that article, but the way the Internet works, you had to go out and search it out. It seems rather strange to me that you would look for and read an article on abortion, then castigate the author for not agreeing with you. . .???

> *I hope I have not misinterpreted your writings on this web page.*

Well, I think you probably have, but that's your right. Almost all the articles at the Probe site started out as radio transcripts for a 5-minute program that airs on about 400 Christian radio stations; then we put the transcripts online. I'm glad you read it, even though I'm not sure why you would want to, if you so easily dismiss others' positions if they're based on revelation and not gut feelings.

But have a good day.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries