

## CAUSES OF DIVORCE

While living in the St. Louis area several years ago I read an article in the local newspaper which stated that the divorce rate in the United States was "leveling off" at the rate of about one in every two marriages ending in divorce. With this kind of "leveling off" we do not have much to be excited about. For many years the number of divorces in this nation has increased. In 1975, for the very first time in history, there were over one million divorces in this nation. That number has increased since then. What is the cause (or causes) for this alarming number of divorces? I do not claim to have all the answers but I do believe that I have observed certain things that contribute to the many divorces that take place each year.

The very fact that so many are getting divorces is one factor that encourages so many divorces. In years past divorce was frowned upon by nearly everyone in our society. Getting a divorce was an admission of failure and was a shameful thing. I am sorry to say that such is no longer the case. The attitude of "everyone is doing it" seems to prevail. Getting a divorce is now the "in thing" and nothing for which one needs to be ashamed. This should not be the case.

Another problem is the failure of parents to properly teach their children. Paul instructs fathers to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). One has not done this if he fails to teach his children the Lord's will pertaining to the marriage relationship. God's will is very plain. When a man and woman are married they have made a life-long commitment to one another (Romans 7:2,3). Parents, we need to teach our children from the time they are able to be taught that when they reach the age when they will be selecting a marriage companion they must consider this a relationship which will exist so long as they both shall live. To fail in teaching this truth is to fail in providing proper teaching for our children.

This failure in teaching is a contributing factor in another cause of divorce. Many young people enter into marriage with the attitude of mind that if things do not work out as they would desire they can always get a divorce. Young people (and old ones as well) need to understand that when difficulties and problems arise (and they surely will) divorce is not an option they have and must never be considered as a solution to their problems.

Selfishness is another cause of divorce. Paul instructed husbands to "*love their wives as their own bodies*" (Ephesians 5:28). A failure to show such love will lead to problems and heartaches. I have known men who thought of no one but themselves. They would spend all their "free" time doing only the things they enjoyed doing. They would spend large sums of money on themselves and on things they wanted, but would never consider doing the same for their wives. As long as husbands or wives continue to think only of themselves and their own selfish desires we will continue to see these marriages ending in divorce.

Several years ago I had the opportunity to talk to a judge that had presided over many divorce cases. I asked him what he thought was the number one cause of divorce. I was somewhat surprised at his answer. He told me that the number one cause of divorce, in his opinion, was the interference of in-laws. He noted that even when other problems were given as the cause of the divorce investigation would show that these problems had often come about as a result of either his or her parents interfering in the marriage. Whether you agree with this judge about this being the number one cause or not, you must admit that this is a problem in many marriages. God said that "*a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife*" (Genesis 2:24). This applies to the woman as well. So many young people are not willing to leave father and mother. They fail to realize

that their first responsibility (as far as human relationships are concerned) is now to their husband or wife. They need to let their mate know this in word and in action. To fail to do so is to invite disaster.

However, not all of the problem lies with young people unwilling to leave father and mother. Many parents are unwilling to let them leave. Many fathers just cannot accept the fact that someone else now has the responsibility of providing for his "little girl" and many mothers feel that they must tell that daughter-in-law how her "little boy" must be cared for. Parents, we need to teach our children to obey God's will and this means that we need to teach them to "leave father and mother and to cleave" to their husband or wife. I have seen parents interfere in their children's marriages and then when divorce finally comes they are ready to say, "See, I told you he (or she) was not good for you." What they never admit is that if they had not interfered their son or daughter could have had a very happy and long-lasting marriage.

Of course, in all of these causes we see a failure to respect God and His will. This we must do if the divorce problem is to be eliminated. To follow His will is to insure happiness here and a home in heaven in the hereafter.

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