

Promise Me You Won't Get a Divorce

by

Bryan Craig



“Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.’” Matthew 19:8

A few years after I got married, I got to be a groomsman in one of my best friend's wedding. He was raised in a strong Christian family, and I had gotten to know his parents during college when I would go home with him over the breaks. However, we had to go to separate homes because his parents were divorced. I met his Mom and Dad individually, and I loved them both. They were both loving and kind and Christ-followers. They had divorced during my friend's senior year in high school, and it was a terrible source of pain for him. He didn't like to talk about it so I never really found out how these two beautiful people couldn't stay together. It was now picture time at my friend's wedding, and I was standing by his Mom's side during the awkward moment when they were trying to decide if his Dad would be in the same picture with his Mom, since they were both remarried. You could cut the tension in the room with a knife. His Mom grabbed my arm and pulled me close, saying, *“Bryan, promise me you won't ever get a divorce!”*

I have never forgotten that scene or her precious words. This year, my wife, Missy, and I will celebrate 25 years of marriage. God has blessed us with four beautiful daughters and a wonderful marriage. Missy and I love each other, and we are best friends. I don't ever take our marriage or my wife for granted, for I know the enemy would love to sneak in and steal what we have. After leading 9 Journey groups, two of them Couple's Journey Groups, one thing I've realized is that marriages are under attack, especially Christian marriages! I started to look for some statistics on marriage, but I don't think I need to convince you that there is a problem with marriages today.

Influencers is primarily a men's ministry, though I realize we are reaching women as well. But I write to you Men, you Husbands, for God ordained you to be the spiritual leaders of your families. I met a man who worked for a national Family ministry, who said something which I first thought was too strong, but later thought to be profound. He said, *"If something is wrong in your marriage and you are the man, it's your fault!"* Wow! But what about a wife who runs off or commits adultery, I quickly thought. He knew what I was thinking, as he went on to say the husband must not have been loving and affirming his wife properly. This is a heavy word, because I have good friends who love the Lord, who have been through a divorce because their wives had an affair or an addiction and decided to leave. In each case, the men tried hard to save their marriage, but they could not. So, I'm very sensitive to the difficulty of marriage and the role of both men and women to make a happy marriage, but I want to explore what God would say to us men about our part in it.

We could go to so many verses about marriage and God's design for it, but I want to focus on Ephesians 5:25-31:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church- for we are members of His body. 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'"

Paul is teaching us that the marriage covenant is just like the Christ covenant. We are to be like Christ to our wives. Just as Christ loves us, we are to love our wives. Think about that for a second. How does Christ love you?

- He forgives you
- He is not offended by you
- He keeps no record of wrongs
- He teaches you His Word
- He prays for you
- He walks with you intimately
- He died for you

When I read the part about Christ “presenting” us to Himself, holy and blameless, and he compares this to marriage, I think about, one day, taking my wife by the hand and presenting her to Jesus. It seems to me that God holds me responsible for her holiness, her radiance, her purity. Did I wash her with God’s Word? Did I pray for her? Did I bring her to Jesus? Did I forgive her? Did I give myself up for her? Did I love her?

A few years ago, Influencers conducted an experiment. What if we took marriages through The Journey? Could this same curriculum, which had transformed men’s lives and helped them learn to Abide, work with women and in the context of couples? At first, we thought we should re-write part of the curriculum to teach about marriage, but the Lord wouldn’t let us do it. We believed He was saying, *“If couples abide in Me, it will bless their marriage.”* This proved to be true. I’ve led two of these Couple’s Journey Groups, and I saw amazing things. As men and women began to grow closer to Christ, they began to look on their spouses in a different way. As they embraced God’s love and forgiveness, they began to love and forgive their spouses. It was an amazing spiritual dynamic.

In the teaching from Ephesians, I believe Paul is saying ...Abide in your Marriage. As much as we are discovering and practicing an abiding relationship with Christ, He would have us, if we are married, to practice an intimate relationship with our wives. Furthermore, as we Abide in Him, He will empower us to know how to Abide with our wives! An Abiding Marriage is a house built on the Rock, which will help us withstand the storms of life that will come at our marriage...and if you’ve been married long enough, you know the storms will come.

Brothers, I challenge you to love your wives as Christ loves you. THIS is what will keep marriages together! If this seems too difficult, spend more time with Him, and let Him show you the way.