

THE SPLITTING OF THE ATOM
Sermon Series: Truth — How Do You Know It When You Hear It?
Next Steps Devotional Guide
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Kelly Stanley

Instructions: This devotional guide can be used individually, by families or in a small group as a way to reinforce the biblical truth you learned from the sermon. If you are using this at home, spread the points throughout the whole week. If you are using this in a small group, divide people up into sub-groups to discuss and share and bring them back to the whole group to share. Do not force anyone to share. Be sure to pray in your group.

1. Who in your life were you shocked they got a divorce and why? What was the short and long term results of that divorce on that couple and on you?
2. The good news is: the divorce rate is on the decline. The bad news is: that decline is primarily due to couples who choose to live together rather than get married. Between 1960-1980, divorce rates rose 250%. Currently in America, our divorce rate is 2.9/1,000. Of all industrialized nations, the US has the highest divorce rate. Currently, the age getting divorce the fastest are those over 50. Baby Boomers are divorcing faster than any age group. Why do you think the USA has the highest divorce rate of industrialized countries and why do you think baby boomers (those born between 1946-1964) are getting divorced the fastest?
3. God has a lot to say about marriage and divorce. Read Genesis 2:22-24 in your sermon notes in point #1 under the heading, "What Does God Have To Say About Marriage?" The state or government did not invent or create marriage. God did. So, what is the point of this passage to you?
4. Read Matthew 19:3-6 in your sermon notes in point #1 under the heading, "What Does God Have To Say About Marriage?" Have you ever been asked a question that appeared to be a trap? If so, how did you feel and react?
5. Read Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31-32 in your sermon notes in point #2 under the heading, "What Does God Have To Say About Marriage?" Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. How is this possible? Take your Bible and read Jesus' words in Matthew 22:30. What does Jesus say and how does this impact your relationship to Christ and to others?
6. On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court struck down all bans on gay marriage, thus legalizing gay marriage in America. Read Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 in your sermon notes in point #3 under the heading, "What Does God Have To Say About Marriage?" Would you ever go to a wedding of a gay couple? Why or why not and what do you imagine could be the personal consequences for you?
7. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 19:6 in point #4 under the heading, "What Does God Have To Say About Marriage?" Today, many couples getting married recite this vow at their wedding: "*We promise to remain committed together in sickness and in health, for better or worse, for as long as our love shall last.*" What would you say to a couple later who said these vows and why?
8. Matthew 19:3-6 sits in the context of there being two different Jewish Theological Schools who held opposite views about divorce. Read in your sermon notes the description of these two schools. The text leads us to believe representatives from both schools were present to lay this trap question for Jesus. Which Jewish Theological School do you think prevailed with the culture and why?
9. One of the hardest truths we must learn from Scripture is that God "tolerates" divorce in rare occasions. Read Deuteronomy 24:1 in your sermon notes in point #1 under the heading, "When Does God Tolerate Divorce?" In Matthew 24:3-6, Jesus refers back to the Old Testament Law on this — the Deuteronomy 24:1 passage is one He had in mind. Read the explanation of the Hebrew word translated as "indecent." The Jewish School of Hillel interpreted "indecent" liberally to mean "overweight, not pretty, not dressed well; not a good cook; not good in bed and etc. Jesus rebukes these Pharisees because as teachers of the Old Testament Law, they of all people should have known what Deuteronomy 24:1 meant. Yet, Jesus knowing why God would tolerate divorce — the Hebrew explanation given in your notes under this point, concludes with Matthew 19:6. Read these words of Jesus in your notes. Now read the Pharisees reaction in Matthew 19:7. Even if a spouse was guilty of the sin mentioned, why would Jesus still stress Matthew 19:6 to the shock of any and everyone?
10. Having read the Pharisees reaction in Matthew 19:7, now read Jesus' reaction in Matthew 19:8 in point #1 under the heading, "When Does God Tolerate Divorce?" Jesus leaves no doubt why God tolerates divorce. God gave them an inch and they want the whole yardstick. God gave them an emergency escape hatch for the most difficult circumstances and they wanted to turn it into an easy exit. The easiest thing to do in life is to make excuses for your sin rather than make an effort to not do those sins. Jesus' point is: while there are a few, limited exceptions, divorce is primarily about selfishness. Why is this true?
11. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 19:9 and the explanation for the Greek New Testament word translated as "sexual immorality" as well as 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 in point #1 under the heading, "When Does God Tolerate Divorce?" Jesus' point is: if you divorce for any reason other than adultery or some other sexual sin your spouse committed, and you remarry, you have committed adultery — no ifs, ands or buts about it. You may be feeling what the disciples felt in Matthew 19:10 (read this) in point #1 under the heading, "When Does God Tolerate Divorce?" What do you think of Jesus' words and why do you think we never really hear this today?
12. Read Exodus 20:14 in your sermon notes in point #2 under the heading, "When Does God Tolerate Divorce?" Most people can understand and accept divorce for this reason. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 5:32 under point

2-(a) and the heading, "Why Is Adultery and Divorce Wrong?" Adultery breaks the covenant of sexual faithfulness. Marriage is foundational to human civilization. One of the tenets of Marxism is the dissolution of the nuclear family. How does adultery break this covenant of sexual faithfulness?

13. Read Malachi 2:14-15a in your sermon notes in point #2-(b) under the heading, "Why Is Adultery and Divorce Wrong?" There is nothing easy about divorce and there are huge negatives that come from it. Divorce will cost you financially. Women suffer the most in a divorce. Best estimates is that women who go through a divorce, their standard of living drops 30% or more. There's also health reasons to not divorce. The National Institute of Health, in studying this, discovered that being a divorced person and a non-smoker is only slightly less dangerous as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day and staying married. Divorced men are twice as likely to die of heart disease, stroke, hypertension, and cancer. Divorced women are two to three times likely to die from various forms of cancer due to divorce. It's tough to be lonely. Why do you think these stats ring true?
14. Read Malachi 2:15b-15 in your sermon notes in point #2-(c) under the heading, "Why Is Adultery and Divorce Wrong?" Three (3) out of five (5) children whose parents divorce say they felt rejected by one of their parents. God hates divorce for a lot of reasons and is because it hurts our children. How does divorce hurt our children and is it really worth damaging out children for primarily selfish reasons? Explain.
15. Read Jesus' words again in Matthew 19:6. Jesus' point is this: the state does not join you in marriage — God does. The state only affirms what God has done and only God can dissolved a marriage. Take your Bible and read the following passages: Jesus' words in Mark 10:11-12; Jesus' words in Luke 16:18 and Paul's words in Romans 7:2-3. What do these Bible passages tell you?
16. Jesus says over and over in Scripture that if we divorce our spouse for any reason other than for adultery or some other sexual sin, and we remarry, in the act of remarrying we are committing adultery — which is a sin. But once that new marriage is consummated, the former marriage relationship is officially dissolved because you are now married to your new spouse. You commit adultery when you enter into the next marriage. You do not continue in adultery by continuing in the next marriage. God wants you to continue in that new marriage — which is a new sacred, covenant relationship based on a new public vow of lifetime faithfulness. If this is you, then, confess this sin and ask God for forgiveness and receive His grace, mercy, love and forgiveness and remain in this new marriage that came by divorce for the rest of your life. Is that something you are willing to commit to do? If so, why? If not, why?
17. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14 and 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 in your sermon notes in point #3 under the heading, "When Does God Tolerate Divorce?" What do these Scripture teach? Now read Ephesians 5:31-32. It is far better that you work through your issues if you are married to an unbeliever. Do you think it is more difficult to be married to an unbeliever? Why or why not?
18. One of the topics that always comes up with divorce is abuse. Read the list of abuses under the heading, "The Top Five Recognized Abuses." You were given 3 things to do up front if there is abuse in your marriage or any relationship. Why do you think some people continue to choose to stay in an abusive marriage? Is it possible they do this to keep their marriage vows and if so, how are they keeping their marriage vows if they do the 3 things up front when abuse occurs?
19. There are biblical ways to avoid divorce. Read Philippians 2:3 in your sermon notes in point #1 under the heading, "Three Biblical Principles On How To Avoid Divorce." Part of what Philippians 2:3 is saying is something we often fail to miss the significance of by asking, *"God, would You help me to be unselfish in this situation?"* Selfishness is big in marriage. To think you can bring two sinners together in marriage and there not be sparks is naive. If you are having financial problems, take our Dave Ramsey Financial Freedom class. If you issue is communication, go see a godly, biblical, Christian counselor. Look at the question above. How would you like God to make you less selfish in your marriage or any relationship?
20. Most people do not know that even Jesus' parents almost divorced before He was born. In Jesus' time, young couples would get in engaged. Engagements were prearranged by parents and the engagement lasted a year. So, Joseph and Mary have known most of their young lives they were going to marry each other. If at any time during the engagement period either one did anything to compromise the engagement, the marriage was off. But during the engagement, the couple remained at home with their own parents. Even though they were considered "technically" married, they were not yet "legally" married. Therefore, they could not engage in any sexual behavior with each other or anyone else. When Gabriel tells Mary in Luke 1:26-38 that she is now pregnant by God to give birth to the Son of God, the Messiah of the world, she eventually has to tell Joseph. Joseph does not believe her. Read his reaction in Matthew 1:19 in point #2 under the heading, "Three Biblical Principles On How To Avoid Divorce." If God had not intervened in Matthew 1:20-25, Joseph would have divorced Mary. Sometimes it takes God to intervene in our marriages to save them from divorce. If you are having marital problems and divorce seems appealing, how would you like God to intervene in your marriage to save it from divorce?
21. Read Revelation 2:4-5 in your sermon notes in point #3 under the heading, "Three Biblical Principles On How To Avoid Divorce." How could you do this in your marriage? In a recent study of couples who had children but divorced, a year later 60% of the men and 73% of the women said, *"I wish we'd tried harder. We made a mistake."* In a Greek home, women were totally secluded, fathers were often sole dictators over their children and prostitution was an accepted part of the culture for men. In the Roman home, divorce had become an absolute epidemic. Women often dated their years by the number of husbands that they'd had. Some had records of ten husbands, eight husbands in five years. One record in the Roman Empire was a 23rd husband marrying and 21st wife. What could you do to focus more on faithfulness rather than feelings in your marriage?