

The Story of a Really Bad Marriage by Chris Garner

Many Christians hold on to the *right* to divorce. They quote Matthew, chapter 19 and remind us that Jesus said, “Marital unfaithfulness is grounds for divorce.” They hold on to this verse just in case, and some will even justify their choice to divorce by including neglect as marital unfaithfulness. Like the Pharisees Jesus spoke to, they look to the letter of the law, instead of God’s heart. Jesus addressed their hard hearts and implored the Pharisees, as He implores us, to quit looking for a way out and begin looking for grace, mercy and God’s power and strength.. Yes, a spouse may have the *right* to divorce, but is it the *right thing* to do? Let me tell you a *true* story...

There once was a woman who had an incredible husband. He loved and cared for her and he provided for her every need. This husband gave his wife encouragement when she was down and upheld her and strengthened her when she thought she couldn’t stand another day of trials and tribulations. Fulfilling the role as prophet, priest and king seemed to come naturally for this husband. He always sought to protect and serve his wife. He brought God’s truth to her and led her in worshipping the Lord. Submission should have never been an issue in this marriage; who couldn’t submit to such a loving husband? This woman had a wonderful husband, but she was stubborn and restless.

The wife rejected her husband and his love and she sought after other lovers; lovers to make her *feel good*. She didn’t commit adultery just once, but many times. She turned her back on her husband and ran off with virtually any man who offered a little excitement and fun. There were times when she shook her fist in her husband’s face and dared him to do something about her adulteries. She was not above selling herself for money. For all the love her husband gave her, this wife seemed to care nothing for him.

Yet, this husband was faithful, even when his wife was unfaithful and didn’t care about him. He waited for her and reached out to her and sent messengers asking her to return to him. Sometimes, she would come back for a while, but often, she only came back long enough to heal emotionally and physically and receive her husband’s comfort. Many would call this husband a fool for loving such a woman, but his incredible love did not allow him to stop loving her and believing in her. Did this husband have a *right* to divorce his wife? He certainly did. Some might even say that it would be the *right* thing to do, knowing his wife’s complete disregard for his love. But *this* husband’s love was a perfect love, because God never turned his back on his wife, Israel.

God remained faithful when his bride, Israel, turned her back on him and committed adultery after adultery. The penalty for adultery in the Old Testament was death, but God did not put Israel to death. It was grounds for divorce, but God did not divorce his people. Not only did he remain faithful, but even paid the penalty for her

sin. Jesus Christ paid the price to redeem a people that did not even want to be redeemed.

Christ is the husband of the New Testament church. He bought and paid for his wife even before the marriage. Yet, we still see the same stubbornness and waywardness in the church today that we saw in the Israelites of old. We commit adultery with fame, money, and possessions, turning our backs on the One who loved us so much that he would die a horrible death for us. Circumstances, technologies and the environment have changed, but people's hearts haven't changed. We still turn from God and run after sin all too quickly.

The Bible tells us that God's divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness; we *can* live lives fully devoted to the Lord and to our spouse. It also means that we can show love and grace and mercy when our spouse doesn't deserve it. We can forgive as God has forgiven us. We can welcome our spouse back home and learn to love him or her, because that is what the love and power of God is all about.

Do you think your marriage is bad? I doubt that it is nearly as bad as the marriage described above. Are you a *perfect* husband or wife? Can you say that you have done everything right? Have you truly loved your spouse as Christ has loved his bride, the church? You may have the *right* to divorce your spouse or you may know someone who has the *right* to divorce his or her spouse, but is it the *right* thing to do? Separation may be necessary due to the circumstances, but is divorce required? Thankfully, God did not turn his back on me when I was unfaithful to him. His great, persevering love is what drew me back to him.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. ~1 Corinthians 13:4-8