

Most Americans Don't See This as Sin—Do You?

In a summer of celebrity splits—Blake Shelton and Miranda Lambert, Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck, Miss Piggy and Kermit—a question comes up for many Christians.

Is it a sin—cohabitating Muppets aside—to break up a marriage?

If you've got a good reason for divorce—adultery, abuse, addiction or abandonment—fewer than 1 in 4 Americans would call that a sin, a new LifeWay Research survey finds.

The survey of 1,000 U.S. adults finds only a minority would call divorce a sin even when:

- There's adultery (39 percent).
- The two people no longer love each other (38 percent).
- One spouse has abandoned the other (38 percent).
- One spouse is abusing the other (37 percent).
- A spouse is addicted to pornography (35 percent).

However, 37 percent say divorce is not a sin in any of those circumstances.

People who identify as Christians were slightly more likely to see sin in those divorcing over abuse (43 percent) or abandonment (43 percent) or pornography addiction (39 percent).

And more than 4 in 10 Protestants (43 percent) think it's sinful for couples to split over a lack of love, according to the survey, which has an overall margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

"Hopefully, they are basing their view of what is sin by what the Bible says," said Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research.

“Clearly in Scripture, God indicates that he doesn’t like divorce. But Jesus did have things to say about this.”

In Matthew 19:6, Jesus tells the Pharisees: “What God has joined together, man must not separate.” However, Jesus adds an exception in verse 8—“sexual immorality.”

A second survey, of 1,000 Protestant pastors, found that 61 percent saw sin in couples giving up a loveless marriage.

The surveys of all Americans and of pastors were conducted in September 2014, when celebs Lambert and Shelton, Garner and Affleck and the Muppet couple, about to star in a new TV show, were all presumably still together.

Last week, Miss Piggy squealed about her breakup on Facebook in a perfect parody of celebrity split announcements:

“After careful thought, thoughtful consideration and considerable squabbling, Kermit the Frog and moi have made the difficult decision to terminate our romantic relationship. Our personal lives are now distinct and separate, and we will be seeing other people, pigs, frogs, et al. This is our only comment on this private matter ... unless we get the right offer.”

It would appear they no longer love each other. No sin in that, many would say.

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