

When the Vow Breaks

Jack Hayford, gifted pastor, teacher and speaker, posed the question: “Do marriage vows matter?” It’s an important question that deserves more discussion. Hayford states that confronting the problem of divorce among Christians is not “a showdown between those who have failed and those who might criticize them—it’s a confrontation needed to face down a mind-set that, if left unchanged, will bring an onslaught of hellish delusions.”

In other words, it’s time for Christians to rethink divorce. Has the church taken on a secular view? Too often, yes.

The blur between secular and Christian views begins in the mind and heart. When we entertain the lies of our culture, we become disillusioned. Lies build on lies. They work on our feelings and eventually alter our relationships.

Over time, we “fall out of love” and excuse those who do the same. This pattern of thinking and behavior is the subject of my book, *Divorce Proofing Your Marriage*.

In my experience, most Christian divorces are not about abuse, repeated infidelity or abandonment. Christians divorce over solvable problems.

Christian couples say: “We’ve grown apart. We’re not in love anymore.” Divorce becomes the solution to unhappiness or lost passion.

Marriage is no longer seen as a covenant but as a breakable contract. When the costs of marriage outweigh the rewards, divorce happens! The attitude is, Time for a new partner who can better meet my needs and make me happy.

Happiness is the ultimate end—so underlying the marriage vows is the unstated escape clause, “I’m outta here if it doesn’t

work out.” In short, postmodern followers of Jesus have ditched the concept of a marriage covenant for the secular view of a marital contract.

Television has a fascination with real people placed in surreal settings. As I flipped through the channels an episode of Temptation Island caught my curiosity, I had to wonder, would Christian couples placed on that island behave any differently? Sadly, the answer to that question is, “Probably not.”

The pull of cultural deception is like an undertow. Many fight it for a while but ultimately succumb to its strength. The fight is against delusion. The problem with being deluded is that you rarely know when you are!

If you believe marriage to be at best tenuous, divorce becomes a viable option. But believe the covenant to be sacred and honorable, and marital relationships will survive.

Marriage will still have its unhappy times, but problems will be solvable, forgiveness will abound, godly obedience will be manifest and blessings will be restored when covenant is invoked.

In *Divorce Proofing Your Marriage*, I identify 10 popular cultural lies Christians use to support divorce. The first lie is that marriage is a contract. Most Christians say, “No, it’s a covenant.”

But their behavior doesn’t support their claim. Behavior follows belief. Too many react to marital difficulty by seeking an escape from their vows.

Reread the chronicles of the Old Testament kings. The Israelites endured king after king: Good kings. Bad kings. Kings whose behavior was despicable.

But God in His mercy and grace maintained the covenant with

His chosen people. His decision to do so was unconditional. Though He sometimes had to deal with His people's behavior through judgment, He never opted out of the covenant.

What is the application to Christian marriage? We have entered into a holy covenant, before God, with another person: Good spouse. Bad spouse. Our mind-set should be "till death do us part," not "till I'm unhappy." Deal with the unhappiness but stay in the covenant.

Without God, most marriages simply limp along. That is precisely why secular culture reframed the institution of marriage to make it more disposable.

But make no mistake, this new view is a lie that pulls you away from biblical truth and desensitizes you to a secular view. As pastor Hayford reminds us, this mind-set leads to an onslaught of hellish delusions—more lies, more anguish and more breakup.

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