

Chapter 2. Introduction

When I was a child, growing up in the Churches of Christ during the 1950's and 60's, divorce was much discussed in our classes and from our pulpits—but the discussion was very much in the abstract. I mean, in the congregation where I grew up, of some 200 members, we only had one couple that had experienced divorce. Times have surely changed! Nowadays, over 50% of all marriages end in divorce. It's not surprising that many are calling for a renewed emphasis on the traditional teachings of all Christian churches on divorce and remarriage. It is hoped that, perhaps, a return to the stricter rules we grew up with will slow the Church's decline into ever more frequent divorce—and who would disagree with the desire to reduce the divorce rate that afflicts even our members?

Indeed, the problem with divorce among believers is even greater than most of us imagine:

Sadly, divorce is not just a non-Christian problem. Pollster George Barna discovered that born-again Christians actually have a higher rate of divorce (27 percent) than nonbelievers (23 percent). Fundamentalists top them all (30 percent). And 87 percent divorced after accepting Christ, presumably aware of the biblical teaching on divorce.³

Perhaps the reason nonbelievers have a lower divorce rate is because they often don't bother to marry in the first place. Nonetheless, no one would consider these percentages as healthy or reflective of sound pastoring.⁴

Is the solution to divorce a stricter doctrine? Certainly, the higher divorce rate of fundamentalists argues to the contrary. More importantly, it's just not right to modify doctrine to suit the needs of the day. Rather, the answer will be found in God's truth, which doesn't change.

³ *Divorce, Remarriage & Adultery*, <http://www.jeremiahproject.com/divorce.html> (Jan. 21, 2001), quoting Chuck Colson, "Any Ol' World View Won't Do," *Jubilee Extra* (May 1996).

⁴ The reason that no group is near the oft-mentioned 50% mark is that the 50% figure is only realized when you take into account multiple divorces by the same people. Thus, while 50% of marriages end in divorce, only 23% to 30% of the people who marry experience a divorce.