

Divorce always creates more problems than it solves.

What is perhaps the most disturbing feature in all this is the fact that this irresponsibility with regard to the permanence of the marriage vow has spread in measure to professing Christians. The shame done to the name of Christ makes one want to hide one's face, and the easy speed with which some couples take steps to separate fills one with wonder at the immaturity and naiveté which makes them think that divorce provides any real solution.

This state of things is all the more sorrowful when near at hand there stands God's ancient way of reconciling man to man, and husband to wife--the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Never was there a more effective marriage counseling service than that which Jesus provides there. Alas, so few seem to go there, maybe because it is humbling to do so, and the divorce court seems the easier option.

Now let it be understood that there is no couple who does not sometimes have differences and a crossing of wills, no matter how loving or dedicated to God they may appear to be. Such things do not surprise or shock the Lord. He simply intends that when such situations arise they should go, not to the divorce court (such a

possibility should never even occur to them), but to the Cross of His dear Son, where barriers can so easily be broken down and hearts made one again. He intends that they should come to the Cross, not once in a lifetime, but again and again as occasion may demand.

The Cross of Jesus, then, is not only the means by which man is reconciled to God, but the means also by which man is reconciled to his fellowman. For if sin causes barriers between man and God, it also causes barriers between man and man and between a man and his wife. And the way by which the Cross reconciles man to man is similar to the way it reconciles man to God.

How then does the cross reconcile man to God? For long centuries God sought to humble man and get him to accept the blame of his sin in order that God might then forgive him and restore him to Himself. But man would not be broken—he persistently refused to take the blame and return to the Lord. At last it was as if God said, “If man will not be broken, I will be. If man will not take the blame, I will take the blame.” That is what happened at the cross; it was God in Christ taking the blame, He the just for the unjust. This was the divine strategy to bring man back to Himself. And it worked in a way no other way had! For whenever a man is given a real sight of the Cross, of God taking the blame that was his,

he is broken, melted, finished, and cries out, ‘O my God, that is my place; Thou are not the wrongdoer, I am! Mine the blame, Thine the love!’” And immediately there is reconciliation between them; man surrenders and God forgives. **The brokenness of Deity has provoked the brokenness of the creature!**

In much the same way the Cross of the Lord Jesus effects the reconciliation of a man and his fellow—and we are thinking here especially of a man and his wife. However a trouble between them may begin, it is soon reduced to just one factor: who is wrong. The wife points to the husband and says, “You’re the one who is wrong!” He points to her and says, “No, you’re wrong!” Because neither will break, the situation becomes intolerable. The next step could be that one will contemplate seeing a lawyer. We will imagine that at least one of them is given a new sight of the Cross of Jesus. The one who was arguing that he was right sees the wholly and eternally right one taking the position of the wholly wrong one—dying as a criminal among criminals. Immediately his words falter and he begins to yield.

It is very difficult to maintain that one is right under the shadow of the Cross. Maybe the other person was wrong to begin with, but has not our reaction to his or her wrong been wrong too, dreadfully wrong? The anger, the

bitterness, the words, the hatred, have they not been wrong? When we look at it that way we cannot say we are wholly right; far from it. And yet the wholly right One took the position of the wholly wrong one in order to save us from our sins. Why not then take the place of the wrong one too and confess it? And that is exactly what the one who sees the Cross afresh begins to do. This is what we call being broken.

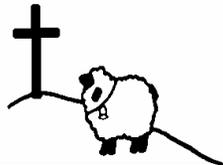
But notice what happens next; that one goes to the other, not to accuse him or her, but rather to accuse himself and to ask the other's forgiveness for his own sins and reactions. The effect of this so often is to melt the other and he or she begins to repent too of what was wrong in his heart. It is not long then before there is a mutual forgiveness, where before there had been mutual accusation, and we have the beautiful sight of two sinners being reconciled together at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. And the love for one another that had long since flown out of the window begins to return, and that in abundant measure.

**Just as the brokenness of the Deity seen at the cross provokes the brokenness of the creature, so the brokenness of one of those creatures who has been to the Cross provokes the brokenness of the other, who then also comes to the Cross—and there they are made one again.**

It may not always work out for you this way—at least, not immediately. This is no gimmick to get the other to repent. God never violates man's free will, and the other can refuse to humble himself. Only the Holy Spirit can melt and persuade him or her to bow the head, but He is more likely to use your brokenness than anything else. You see, you are no longer pointing at the other's sins, only confessing your own. The thing that the other was reacting against is no longer there and that gives God His chance to work in that heart too.

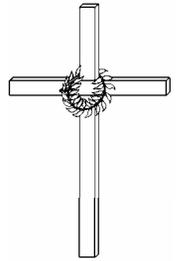
So you be the first at the Cross, not waiting for the other! And even if the other does not immediately join you there, you will have the joy of knowing that your sins have been washed away and you are at peace with God. But again and again we find that the Cross of Jesus does indeed triumph in both hearts and great praise is brought to God over another home gloriously restored.

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## *First at the Cross*



Divorce is now so easy to obtain and so acceptable socially that many consider it to be the obvious way out when a couple does not get along too well.

Sometimes at the first hint of trouble, without waiting to see if there is another way around their problem, off the partners march to their respective lawyers and thence to the divorce court.

Their differences seem to be so irreconcilable that even the children's highest good must be sacrificed to their parents' desire to separate and find new mates.

The real cause is not always a big issue between them, but simply the unwillingness of one to give way to the other in a succession of quite trivial matters; and even deeper, the refusal of but one of them to say "I'm sorry," and mean it.

For lack of that little word "sorry," innumerable marriages have broken down, infinite misery has been caused, and incalculable harm has been done to the children and young people in those families.