**Marital Separation Is Sinful**

Except in the case of divorce for fornication (Matthew 5:32), marital separation is sinful. God really does expect us to follow through on our vow “till death do us part.”

We know this because I Corinthians 7:10 tells the wife not to “depart from her husband.” The word translated “depart” here is “chorizo” and according to Thayer means “to separate, divide, part, put asunder, to separate one’s self from, to depart.” This is not the same Greek word as for divorce (“apoluo”). Plainly put then a wife is not to depart from her husband. The ASV and NKJV also have “depart” here. The ESV, RSV, and NIV have “separate.” The NASB has “leave.” From these translations it should be clear what I Cor 7:10 is forbidding. Of course it also forbids divorce because divorces legally facilitate separations, but the verse specifically forbids separation … even if no legal divorce takes place.

We know this also because of I Corinthians 7:3-5 which reads “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” Sexual separation then is only allowed for a couple for a temporary period of time, agreed upon by both parties, for the purpose of fasting and prayer. The reason given for this is so “that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” Couples who martially separate are not satisfying their sexual obligations to each other and therefore tend to cause their spouse undue temptation to be satisfied elsewhere. To transgress this passage is sin (I John 3:4) just like transgressing any other passage.

We also know marital separation is sinful because Matthew 19:6b instructs “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (NKJV). Of course it is wrong to divorce, but this verse specifically says even separation is wrong. The ESV, NIV, and NASB also have “separate” here. The KJV, RSV, and ASV have “put asunder.” So the standard translations make clear what is forbidden here.

And we know marital separation is sinful because I Peter 3:7 commands the husband to “dwell” with his wife “according to knowledge.” Of course the emphasis here is “according to knowledge,” but it is impossible to dwell with your wife according to knowledge if you are not dwelling with her period.

Does “situation ethics” change this “no marital separation” law in any respect? Let’s not advocate “evil, that good may come” (Romans 3:8).