

**SERVING CHRIST**

**1 CORINTHIANS 7**

# CORINTH

## RECONSTRUCTION OF ANCIENT CORINTH (c. AD 100)



JESUS DESIRES TO USE  
YOU TO SERVE HIM IN  
YOUR VOCATION AND  
RELATIONSHIPS

# INTRODUCTION

- 1 Corinthians 6 ends with a clear command: Since Christ purchased your body and soul, “glorify God in your body” (6:12).
- 1 Corinthians 7 logically follows this command at the end of chapter 6.
- Paul offers instructions on how to glorify God with one’s body as it relates to sexuality (vv. 1–16, 25–40) and vocation (v. 17–24).

# INTRODUCTION

- While his tone in chapters 1–6 was very stern and corrective, Paul moves to a pastoral tone starting in chapter 7.
- Now that he has sufficiently rebuked the Corinthian believers regarding their unrighteous behavior, he can offer pastoral instruction on how to recover in a godly way.

**BELIEVERS MUST SEEK  
TO HONOR GOD IN  
THEIR CURRENT STAGE  
OF LIFE**

**1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-16**

# SEX AND MARRIAGE

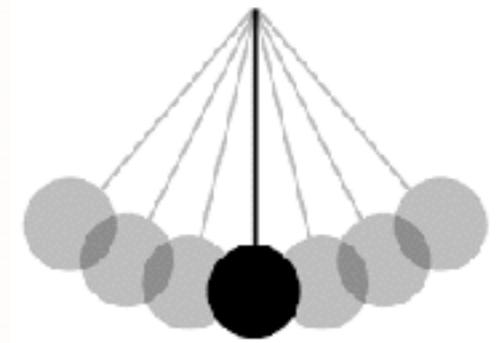
- While chapter 6 focused on obvious, significant errors in the Corinthian church, chapter 7 is Paul's way of dealing with issues that need depth of insight and pastoral guidance.
- If it was difficult for the Corinthians to see that engaging in prostitution was wrong, how much more difficult would it be for them to navigate the sexual nuances and expectations of their own marriages?

# SEX AND MARRIAGE

- In verses 1–7, Paul opens with general principles for sex within marriage.
- Because the Corinthian culture was extremely indulgent, hedonistic, and sinful in their sexual practices, some believers in Corinth were teaching that it was never permissible for a man to have sexual interaction with a woman.

# SEX AND MARRIAGE

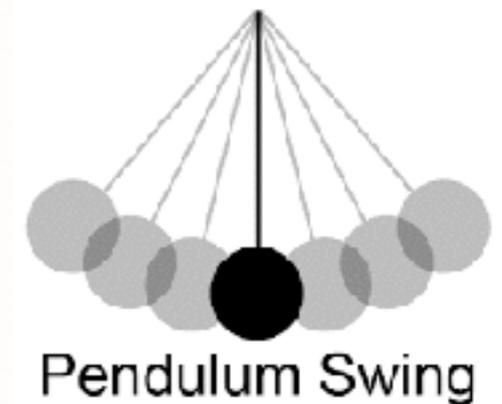
- This ascetic group believed that sex inside of marriage was only permissible when procreation was in view, and that using sex as a form of marital pleasure alone was sinful.
- While it was correct for these believers to avoid the sexual norms of the culture, Paul's instructions show that this group of believers was seriously overreacting in their view of sexuality within marriage.



Pendulum Swing

# SEX AND MARRIAGE

- Against these two extremes of pagan hedonism and religious asceticism, Paul offers a balanced and humanizing view of sexuality.
- In his view, Paul maintains that married couples should engage in sexual activity regularly, unless they are in a period of fasting.



# SEX AND MARRIAGE

- He also asserts that both genders have equal rights in their sexual experiences, something very foreign to the Corinthian culture, which was known for depriving women of consent in sexual encounters.
- According to Paul, the physical body was good and sex was good, as long as it was in the context of marriage.

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# CONCESSION

- The “concession” mentioned in verse 6 is commenting on the mutually agreed-upon period of abstinence so a couple could focus on prayer.
- Paul is not commanding that husbands and wives begin to observe these periods of abstinence, but he does permit it.
- Paul takes a moment in verse 7 to ward off any apprehension toward celibacy as a choice (for the unmarried).

# CONCESSION

- Paul sees great benefits in remaining single and focused on the Lord as he was.
- Paul sees that being married or single is a gift from God.
- God enables each one to be married or single (Matthew 19:12).

# MARITAL SITUATIONS

- In verses 8–16, Paul deals with special and diverse marital situations that are still applicable for us today.
- Following his guiding principle, his primary instructions are for the unmarried, the widowers, and those contemplating divorce to simply remain faithful in their current situations in light of Jesus' teaching.

# MARITAL SITUATIONS

- Verses 8 and 9 reveal that if an unmarried person or a widow desires to remarry, he or she is permitted.
- Remaining in his /her current state is to be preferred for reasons listed in the next section (7:26, 32–35).
- However, if one cannot remain pure in singleness (if one lacks the gift of singleness), it is better to marry.

# MARITAL SITUATIONS

- Paul shifts his focus to believers who are married to other believers in verse 10; the apostle speaks the teaching of Jesus—as a rule, no divorce.
- The words “separate” and “divorce” on the part of the wife and husband likely has little significance; they both speak of divorce.
- Reconciliation, not divorce, is the course to be sought when believers face challenges in their marriage.

# MARITAL SITUATIONS

- “To the rest” in verse 12 refers to believers who are married to unbelievers.
- If the Christian is married to someone who is without faith, the believer is to remain faithful to Jesus’ views on marriage and divorce.
- As the believer in the marriage lives a God honoring life, she is a witness to her husband and her children.

# MARITAL SITUATIONS

- The words “sanctifying” / “making holy” implies that as long as the unbeliever remains in the marriage, the potential for his / her salvation remains as he / she watches the lifestyle of the believer.
- If a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever ends, it should only be due to the unbelieving partner.
- The believing partner should remain faithful to Jesus’ views on marriage and divorce.

# MARITAL SITUATIONS

- Marriage to the believer is not about the benefits that one can receive from a spouse, but rather reflecting the very commitment that Christ has made to the Church.
- While other marriages would break down at the point of spiritual disagreement, the believer instead seeks to represent God's unconditional and steadfast commitment to His people.

**GOD HAS A PURPOSE  
FOR BELIEVERS IN THEIR  
CURRENT STAGES OF  
LIFE**

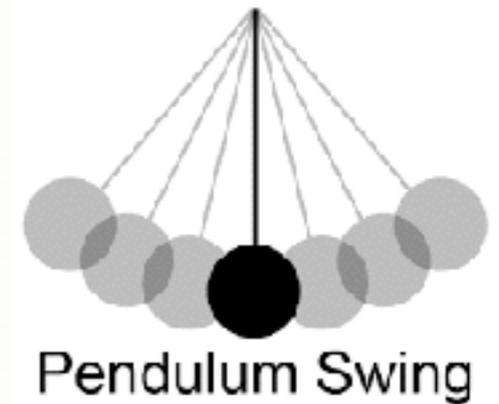
**1 CORINTHIANS 7:17-40**

# VOCATION - CALLING

- The section including verses 17–24 is the centerpiece of all of chapter 7.
- Many in the Corinthian church assumed that a change in Gospel-identity meant escaping from or changing all the other callings in their daily lives, whether physical, vocational or marital.
- Paul reminds them that the Gospel alone gives them identity and instructs them to live ordinary, faithful lives in whatever calling they find themselves.

# VOCATION - CALLING

- The Gospel makes all believers equal before the eyes of the Lord, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, bondservant or citizen.
- Christ's work bought every believer with a high price, and to change callings after conversion only proves that one cares about the approval of man instead of God.

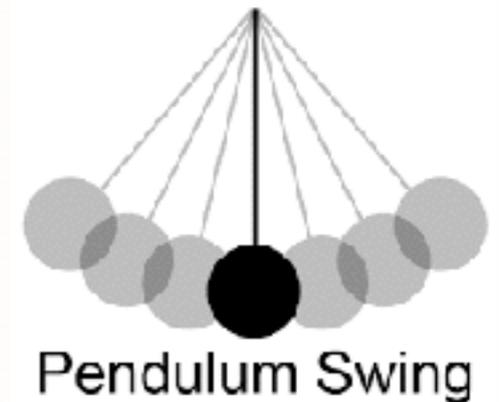


# VOCATION - CALLING

- Like sexuality, the Corinthians swung between two extremes in their view of calling and vocation.
- One view claimed that upward mobility in one's career was all that mattered.
- The other view held that upon becoming a believer, one should try to change or escape from one's current vocation.

# VOCATION - CALLING

- Paul's instruction remains consistent to these believers and offers a remarkable balance between these two extremes:
- Their temporary vocations should not be something to escape from nor something to idolize as if it were God, but instead something to engage in diligently every day "with God" (v. 24).



# UNMARRIED

- In verses 25 to 40, Paul circles back to his general principle of “remaining” as it relates to the betrothed.
- In contrast to verse 10, Paul mentions that he has no Scriptural words from Jesus on this issue, but he offers his opinion that should not be taken lightly.
- Nevertheless, the Corinthian church can decide for or against his particular instruction in this section, and it would not be considered sin on their part.

# UNMARRIED

- While there is debate over what Paul means with the word “betrothed” or “virgins,” it is clear that these instructions involve single people.
- His opinion for single people is for them to remain single, though he expresses that this is his personal opinion and not a Christian mandate.

# UNMARRIED

- Paul gives a reason for his advice to single people: the “present distress” in verse 26.
- This present crisis was more than likely the famine that hit Corinth in A.D. 51.
- Some believe that Paul interpreted this famine as an end-time event, which is why he warns the unmarried to remain single.

# UNMARRIED

- Being married in the Corinthian world meant setting up a household, which would be very difficult and painful to sustain during famine, especially as many children soon followed marriage in ancient times.
- To Paul, both singleness and marriage are gifts, but singleness in “this present crisis” was to be preferred. Verses 32–35 further flesh out this idea.
- Single people needed not divide their time, resources and focus between the Lord and a family.

**APPLICATION:**

**DIVORCE**

# DIVORCE

- Deuteronomy 24:1 – “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house”
- Malachi 2:16 – “For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel.

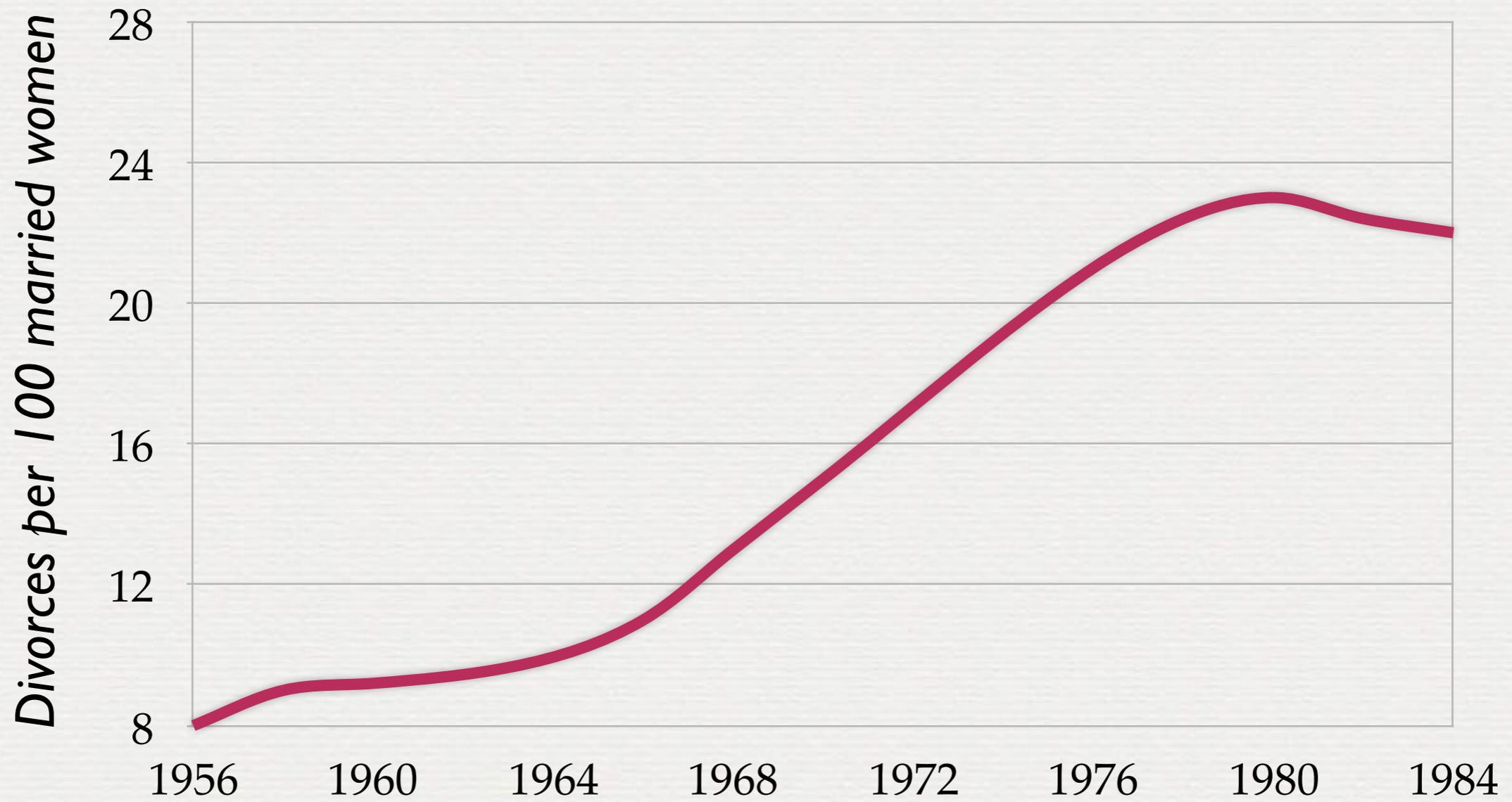
# DIVORCE

- Matthew 5:31-32 – “It was said, whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce, but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

# 1 CORINTHIANS 7

- “But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.”

# DIVORCE RATE



# DIVORCE RATE

- Two trends - sharp increase in late 1960s through 1970s and slight decline in the 1980s.
- Increase due to attitude and opportunity:
  - Attitude - *less commitment, no fault divorce*
  - Opportunity - *economic opportunities for women*
- Decline - *fewer couples tying the knot*

# DIANE MEDVED

“I have to start with a confession: This isn’t the book I set out to write. I planned to write something consistent with my previous professional experience helping people with decision making.... I thought that striking down taboos about divorce was another part of the ongoing enlightenment of the women’s, civil- rights, and human potential movements of the last twenty-five years....To my utter befuddlement, the extensive research I conducted for this book brought me to one inescapable and irrefutable conclusion: I had been wrong.”

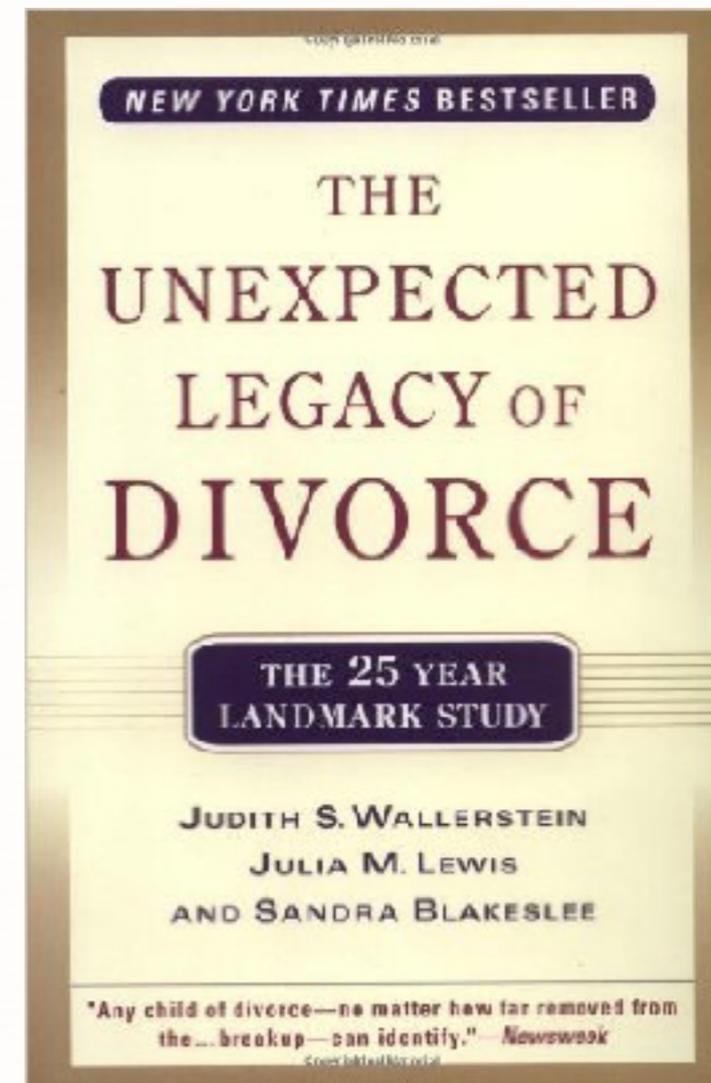
# THE CASE AGAINST DIVORCE

Discover the lures,  
the lies, and the  
emotional traps  
of divorce—  
plus the seven vital  
reasons to stay  
together.

Diane Medved, Ph.D.

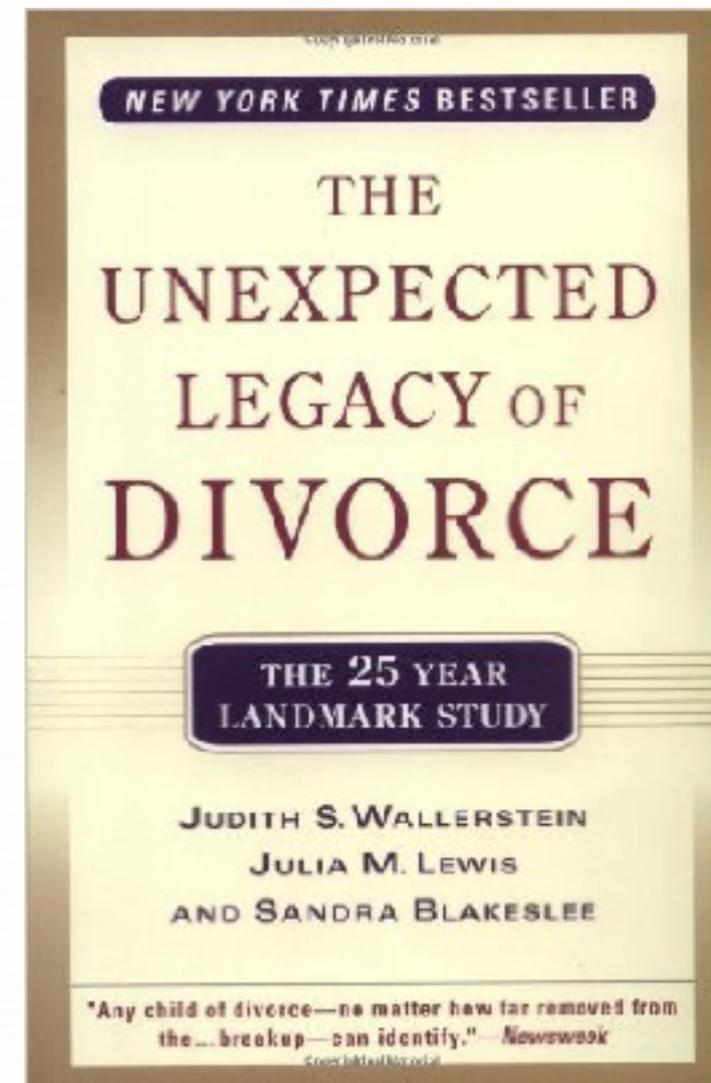
# DIVORCE AND FAMILIES

- Three out of five children felt rejected by at least one parent.
- Five years after the divorce, more than 1/3 of children were doing markedly worse than they had been before the divorce.
- Half grew up in settings in which the parents were warring with each other even after the divorce.

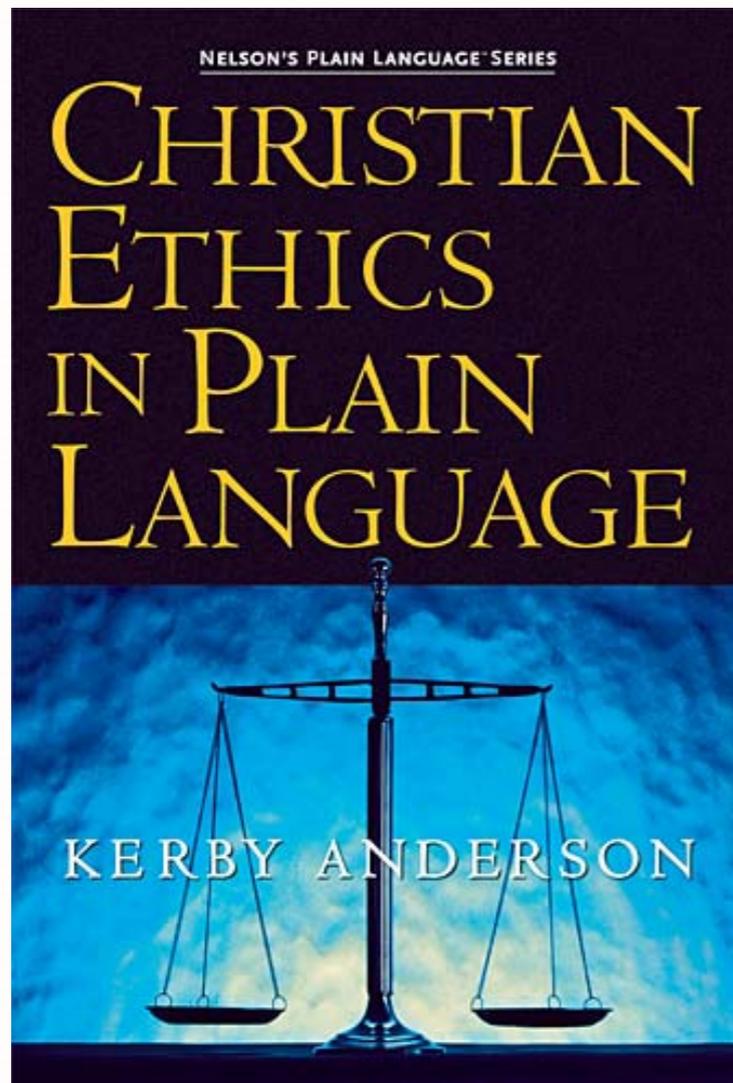


# DIVORCE AND FAMILIES

- Emotional impact – adult children of divorce still show emotional scars.
- Educational impact - do poorer in school and exhibit greater behavioral problems.
- Economic impact – single moms are 5X more likely to be poor.



# RESOURCES



Articles on marriage, divorce, and other topics on the Probe website:

[www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)