

## Divorce and Remarriage

### On divorce:

God hates divorce!

In a culture where divorce is a very common thing, let us be quick to proclaim the mind and heart of God concerning it. The fruit of divorce is very evident in American culture. In fact our culture suffers at every level because of it. Parentless children abound, love is replaced by neglect, and the core unit of human society is literally torn in two. The marriage vow is annulled, and God is dishonored. Holy matrimony is not “**holy**” at all, as mankind piles up his sins before a holy God, who has warned of its deadly consequences.

*Matthew Henry comments; If we consider what mischiefs to families and states, what confusions and disorders, would follow upon arbitrary divorces, we shall see how much this law of Christ is for our own benefit, and what a friend Christianity is to our secular interests.*

May God have mercy on our society, and may the hearts of the fathers be turned again to the children!

**Malachi 2:14-16** - 14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, **because you have broken faith with her**, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. 15 Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. NIV

The NASB does a poor job translating this verse. It is very obscure, so we will look at the NIV which is far more accurate in this case.

A. Here the prophet rebukes Israel for “breaking the covenant” of marriage. Looking to God’s original intent in marriage, he asks the question, **“Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his.”** God has designed marriage to be an unbreakable union between two parties, a union where the two become one in soul and body. The God of love speaks and declares His heart to us, that marriage is to be a union of lovingkindness and serving one another in faithfulness. Divorce here is called *“breaking faith.”*

B. **“I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel,** - It cannot be expressed more clearly than this. Divorce is a sinful act, one that perpetuates sin again and again for years to come. There are inevitable consequences that follow such a decision. In short, there are no winners in divorce, but every one involved is a loser. Usually the children take the brunt of the consequences.

**Matthew 19:3-10** - 3 And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" 4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, ' **For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?**' 6 "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." 7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" 8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9 "And I say to you,

whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." NASB

- A. Here God Himself comments on divorce. The will of God is very clear on this matter. Verse 6 declares, ***“what God has joined together, let no man separate.”*** This does not mean that divorce is a sin in every circumstance, but the only exception given is as stated in verse 9, ***“except for marital unfaithfulness.”*** The only other exception given in the scripture is the case of the unbelieving spouse who leaves the marriage voluntarily, after every attempt has been made by the believing spouse to maintain the marriage.
- 1 Corinthians 7:15** - 15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, **let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases**, but God has called us to peace. NASB
- In the context of the above passage, divorce is being discussed v-10-14. In verse 15, the believer is *“not bound”*, that is bound to the marriage covenant in this circumstance.
- B. Jesus, like the prophet Malachi, points to God’s original intent in marriage, **oneness**. God intends for the two to become one in soul and body. He desires an unbreakable union of love and kindness, commitment and faithfulness. He comments that divorce was permitted because their hearts were hard, but shows that divorce and remarriage is as the sin of adultery, giving only one exception. Paul also comments on the Lord’s teaching;
- 1 Corinthians 7:8-11** - 8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. 9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn. 10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that **the wife should not leave her husband 11 (but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away.** NASB
- C. Search your bible, and you will find the scripture to be very consistent in its position on this matter.
- D. If you have committed the sin of divorce, consider that, like any other sin, God’s grace and mercy to forgive and restore, far exceed the severity of our sins. This sin really is like many others, that all of us have committed. We are guilty of many, many sins before a holy God. But Christ died for all of our sins, His atonement was a perfect work, and we are restored to perfect fellowship with God. It would not be good to harbor guilt or shame for this matter. Just as the woman caught in adultery, Jesus says, ***“woman, where are your accusers? Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.”*** The heart of Jesus is one of forgiveness and compassion, restoration and kindness!
- E. The sin of divorce should not be ***compounded by a remarriage*** which is unlawful (as defined below), this could be a severe transgression bringing difficult and untold consequences.
- F. **God** does not want any loose ends dangling about a Christians marriage, ***He wants problems in marriage resolved!***

## On remarriage:

The above teaching of Jesus and Paul actually clarify the understanding of remarriage as well. There are two exceptions given in which remarriage is not considered sinful.

These are;

- **marital unfaithfulness,(that is adultery, sexual immorality)**
- **the unbelieving spouse who leaves**

In these circumstances, the believer is not bound. Jesus actually declares, v-9 ***“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”*** This is also stated in Mark and in Luke, but there the exception is NOT given. These matters are very serious and should be looked upon with sober judgment.

If you have been remarried, and you did NOT have biblical grounds for the divorce, OR your spouse did NOT have biblical grounds for their divorce, a few things should be considered;

1. You have committed ***adultery against God*** and your former spouse, and cause your new spouse to be an adulterer as well. This is a serious matter with God. One should consider how you have been so deluded in your life as to commit such a transgression? Were you aware of this sin before you committed it? If not, why not? Would you consider such a weighty matter as remarriage without consulting God and His Word? Is your life governed by God and His Word or by your own sinful will and emotions? Frankly, one who commits actions like this should seriously consider the **REALITY** of their own salvation as this behavior manifests a serious spiritual dysfunction in ones life. I am not saying that you are not regenerate, but that you should seriously ask yourself this question and probe God’s Word to be sure that you are.
2. If you have genuinely recognized the above and do wholeheartedly agree with God about the matter of your sin, then ***God’s grace is sufficient*** to cover your sin! If you are in Christ, God has forgiven your sin and made you spotless, yes holy and blameless. You are His beloved, there is no guilt that remains, and perfect fellowship has been restored between you and your Father God.
3. ***Thanksgiving*** would be in order for God’s grace.
4. Although God has forgiven you, generally speaking, you will still bear the ***earthly consequences*** that follow this matter.

If you are seeking to be remarried, you should consider the following;

**1 Corinthians 7:17, 20, 27-28, 39** - 17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And thus I direct in all the churches. 20 Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called. - 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you should marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. 39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, **only in the Lord.** NASB

1. If you are divorced, you should have biblical grounds for your divorce, or be reconciled to your spouse.
2. It should go without saying that you should *not even consider marrying an unbeliever*. V-39 expresses that marriage should only be “in the Lord.” The bible is replete with caution against such a matter. Light and darkness fellowship not.

A helpful checklist from “Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage” (by Jay Adams) – Principles

A. Marriage

1. is a divinely ordained institution
2. is the first and most fundamental institution
3. is covenantal and binding
4. is a covenant of companionship
5. is the place for true intimacy
6. is to conform to the model of Christ and His church

B. Divorce\*

1. always stems from sin
2. is not necessarily sinful
3. always breaks a marriage
4. is never necessary among believers
5. is legitimate on the grounds of sexual sin
6. is legitimate when an unbeliever wishes to divorce a believer
7. is forgivable when sinful

\* Christians seeking *divorce* need to consult their pastors and make sure they are behaving in a manner consistent with the scripture

C. Remarriage\*\*

1. in general, is desirable
2. is possible for a divorced person
3. is possible for a sinfully divorced person through forgiveness
4. is possible only when all biblical obligations have been met
5. is possible only when parties are prepared for marriage

\*\* Christians seeking *remarriage* need to consult their pastors and make sure they are behaving in a manner consistent with the scripture

Questions

1. Are all, one, or none of the parties Christians
2. Who wants the divorce?
3. On what grounds?
4. Does this party really want a divorce, or only a change in the situation?
5. Has 1 Corinthians 6 been violated?
6. Has sexual sin been present?
7. Is there acceptable evidence for such sin or only hearsay and/or supposition?
8. Has church discipline been applied? (Matt 18)
9. If so, what was the outcome?
10. Is there repentance/forgiveness?
11. Is reconciliation required?
12. Does an unbeliever want the marriage to continue?
13. Has a former spouse remarried another?
14. Did any church fail to handle a divorce/remarriage properly?
15. If so, how? And what must be done to set this straight?
16. Is the believer in a state where the church may declare him/her free from all obligations and, therefore, free to remarry?
17. If not, what more needs to be done to bring about this condition?

Questions? [shaansloan@att.net](mailto:shaansloan@att.net)