

## DIVORCE and REMARRIAGE

Introductory comments:

1. If you are presently married:
  - you are married to the right person!
  - God's will for you is to make this marriage a good one!
2. Preview of my position on divorce:
  - a. Two legitimate grounds for divorce:
    - (1) Physical act of adultery
    - (2) Irreconcilable desertion by an unbeliever
  - b. If divorce is on one of those grounds, then the divorced persons are free to marry someone else

I. God's fundamental plan for the human race is lifelong, monogamous marriage

A. Matthew 19: And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" 4 He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Jesus thus corrects a current practice of easy divorce for trivial reasons:

*Mishnah*, Gittin 9:10: The school of Shammai say: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her...And the school of Hillel say...even if she spoiled a dish for him...Rabbi Akiba says, even if he found another fairer than she...

B. Malachi 2:13 And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14 But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. 15 Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 16 "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, [or NASB: "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel; also NET] covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." (compare 1 Peter 3:7)

C. The great destructiveness of divorce

*Second Chances*, by Judith Wallerstein (1989).

Also by Wallerstein: *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce: A 25 Year Landmark Study* (2000)

II. But God allows divorce to give some relief to one spouse when the other has desecrated the marriage by adultery

Matthew 19:7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" 8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

A. Implications

1. If "marital unfaithfulness" (Greek *porneia*) occurs, divorce is allowed but not required (forgiveness and reconciliation should be first option).
2. Divorce and remarriage because of marital unfaithfulness are not wrong (divorced person is considered single again)
  - Mishnah*, Gittin 9:3: "The essential formula in the bill of divorce is, 'Lo, thou art free to marry any man.'"
3. If divorce is obtained for other reasons, God still counts the couple as married (vs. 9)
4. The unfaithful partner can't initiate a divorce on account of his (or her) own adultery!

## B. Teachings from other verses

1. The “innocent party” [for example, Sally] in wrongful divorce is not free to remarry  
Matthew 5:32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.  
Unless: the spouse [for example, Walter] marries someone else, or commits adultery, which breaks the first marriage bond, and Sally is then free to remarry (according to Matt. 19)

2. Mark and Luke omit the exception for adultery

Mark 10:2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”  
[remember background: trivial reasons]

Mark 10:11 And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

-->Exception for adultery not stated but assumed

3. Paul faces a new situation (Christian and non-Christian married) and allows divorce for desertion by unbeliever

1 Corinthians 7:12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. 13 If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

4. What about desertion by one who claims to be a Christian?

Pursue Matt. 18:15-17 (church discipline) until there is some solution

## C. Practical questions

1. Are there other legitimate grounds for divorce?

2. What if someone is divorced for other reasons, and then marries someone else?

a. The marriage began with adultery

b. It is still a marriage in God’s sight (further sin to dissolve it!)

c. Ask God for forgiveness and blessing, and make this marriage a good one

## III. Practical words for people in different situations

A. If you plan to get married someday: Matt. 19:6

B. If you are married

C. If you have wrongfully gotten a divorce, and neither one of you has remarried

D. If you have experienced a painful divorce -- you didn’t want it, but your husband or wife divorced you anyway --

OR: if you were a child in a divorce situation, and you grieved when your mother & father dissolved the marriage

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<http://www.christianessentialsbc.com>.

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