



Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

Divorce is a difficult doctrine for many believers. It is also a very difficult subject for unbelievers. The biblical principles pertaining to this all-to-common and devastating series of events in married lives are very important. Handling divorce properly and the profound feeling of rejection that accompanies it is important. Handling it according to God's plan through correct application of His Word is the key to maintaining momentum in your spiritual life!

The husband, because he is a believer, is mandated to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. No unbelieving husband can fulfill this mandate toward his wife. No unbelieving wife can obey her husband as unto the Lord. The mandate for wives to obey their husband is part of one of the four Divine Institutions - Marriage, which applies to unbelievers as well as believers.

Marriage is. In 1 Corinthians 7:10, a divine mandate is given that the wife should not leave her husband nor divorce her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. 1 Cor. 7:10-11; 1 Cor. 7:14-15.

"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." (1 Corinthians 7:10-11, NASB)

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. 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." (1 Corinthians 7:14-15, NASB)

The word "divorce" means "freedom to remarry." Biblical divorce gives the right of remarriage. Many people think that they should not be blamed for their weakness or their failures in the matter of marriage. However, your choice of marriage partner is of your own volition and making that decision is one of the most important in life. Once married, the success or failure of marriage depends on many decisions of both husband and wife.

Divorce is the severing of both the civil and spiritual marriage contracts between one man and one woman. However, we will be dealing with the Scriptural basis for divorce and under what conditions does the Word of God grant the right of remarriage.

Divorce With the Right of Remarriage in the Church Age

When the marital union of two believers or two unbelievers is broken, there are five principles in Scripture which apply concerning the right of remarriage. They are salvation of a spouse, adultery, desertion, victim of a divorce scheme, and physical death.

Salvation

The first principle concerning the right of remarriage is that all things before salvation are blotted out at the moment of salvation. For the unbeliever, whatever sins and failures regarding marriage and divorce are removed at the point of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. They could have been married and divorced several times as an unbeliever, but at the instant of salvation, they become free to remarry. For the unbeliever, every sin committed during marriage, divorce, and remarriage were all judged on the Cross by God the Father just like all of the other sins of mankind. If an unbeliever was



living in an adulterous marriage prior to salvation, at the moment of salvation that marriage becomes instantly purified. Eph. 1:7; Isaiah 43:25; Isaiah 44:22; Col. 1:14; Psalms 103:12.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7, NASB)

"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, And I will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25, NASB)

"I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you." (Isaiah 44:22, NASB)

"in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:14, NASB)

"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalms 103:12, NASB)

If an unbeliever has been married and divorced 14 times before salvation, if at the moment of salvation they are single then they can marry again. Any number of marriages and divorces are blotted out at the moment of salvation and they have the freedom and right of remarriage. Psalms 103:12.

"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalms 103:12, NASB)

A believer's life starts at the moment of salvation. No Christian has a right to penalize other Christians for something which occurred before salvation, or any other time. No believer should judge another believer for their sins either prior to salvation nor after salvation. Any divine discipline that should be administered will only come from the justice of God. Matt. 7:1-2; Heb. 10:30; Rom. 8:33. See category on [Judging Others](#).

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2, NASB)

"For we know Him who said, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.' And again, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.'" (Hebrews 10:30, NASB)

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;" (Romans 8:33, NASB)

Adultery

The second principle concerning the right of remarriage is that divorce because of adultery gives the right of remarriage to the non-adulterous spouse. The adulterous spouse does not have the right to remarry. If the adulterous party remarries, that is also adultery and causes the second husband or wife to be living in adultery. Adultery does not mean that the marriage must breakup. The innocent spouse may "forgive as Christ forgave." Matt. 5:31-32; Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Col. 3:13.

"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." (Matthew 5:31-32, NASB)

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9, NASB)

"And He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery



against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”” (Mark 10:11-12, NASB)

“bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” (Colossians 3:13, NASB)

In Luke 16:18, Jesus Christ is defining an adulterous marriage and the prohibitions involved. He is not saying that divorce is prohibited. Our Lord is saying that God does not recognize adulterous marriages even if they are recognized by civil law.

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.” (Luke 16:18, NASB)

Desertion

The third principle concerning the right of remarriage is that divorce because of desertion of the husband or wife gives the right of remarriage to the other. 1 Cor. 7:15.

“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.” (1 Corinthians 7:15, NASB)

Victim of a Divorce Scheme

The fourth principle concerning the right of remarriage is for the victim of a divorce scheme of deception and/or a victim of your spouse’s continued implacability or hatred. The guilty party does not have the right of remarriage. The divorce scheme is any excuse or false pretext to divorce one spouse for the intended purpose of marrying someone else. In the dispensation of Israel, the innocent victim of the divorce scheme had the right of remarriage. In Deuteronomy 24:1-2, “found some indecency in her” was a scheme used to divorce a woman. An example would be getting her to touch something unclean, thus making her unclean. Another example would be a husband who falls in love with another woman, so finds a way to legally divorce his wife so he can go ahead with the second marriage. This second marriage would be an adulterous marriage. The innocent wife of the first marriage would have the right of remarriage.

“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, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife,” (Deuteronomy 24:1-2, NASB)

Physical Death

The fifth principle concerning the right of remarriage is that if your spouse dies, then the surviving spouse has the right of remarriage. Death destroys the marriage bond, but it does not destroy the love in marriage. Love is a mental attitude. Although the surviving spouse is free to remarry, they should consider taking enough time to be sure they have fully recovered from the loss of their loved one. This is a time to focus on the intake of Bible doctrine and to grow spiritually prior to considering remarriage. They must be sure they have fully recovered from the loss of their previous spouse. Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39.

“For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.” (Romans 7:2-3, NASB)



"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." (1 Corinthians 7:39, NASB)

Whenever there is a bona fide basis for divorce, there is the right of remarriage. There is no right of divorce because your spouse is negative to Bible doctrine. When someone divorces for other than a biblical cause, the remarriage is tantamount to adultery. Matt. 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." (Matthew 5:31-32, NASB)

The first nine commandments as stated in Exodus deal with primarily overt activity, but the Lord Jesus Christ makes it plain in the Sermon on the Mount that sin goes beyond the overt act. Sin exists in the mental attitude as well. Matt. 5:21-22; Matt. 5:27-28.

"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell." (Matthew 5:21-22, NASB)

"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-28, NASB)

If you marry against God's will, that is, as an unbeliever or a wrongly divorced person, the doctrine of status quo supersedes the sin part of that problem. Do not break it up! Confess the sin and move on! Do not look back, but learn Bible doctrine and stay filled with the Holy Spirit and use the principle of winning that person to the Lord. If a couple decides they have married the wrong person, they are not to break up their marriage, but to remain married and emphasize daily intake and application of Bible doctrine.

Divorce With No Right of Remarriage in the Church Age

The Scripture is silent regarding some obvious and legitimate reasons for divorce before the law such as physical abuse to spouse or children, drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual abuse of spouse or children, homicidal or suicidal tendencies or threats, criminality by a spouse against the family, and insanity. All of these things are legitimate reasons for divorce before the law. Anytime the spouse or children are in a life threatening situation, the innocent spouse has the right of divorce.

The Scripture is silent because those who have the right of divorce in these cases have no right of remarriage. The purpose of divorce is the protection of life and limb, not the basis of remarriage. If the guilty party remarries or dies, then the innocent party has the right to remarry. The guilty party is not permitted to remarry.

The innocent spouse in such cases has undergone a traumatic experience which requires time to recover and heal. The innocent spouse should focus on the consistent intake and application of Bible doctrine, allow the Holy Spirit to renovate their soul, and give themselves time to grow spiritually. Spiritual growth is the key to recovery from a difficult divorce and the traumatic events that preceded it.



Grace Principles Regarding Divorce

As with anything in the spiritual life, God's grace is the focus. Regarding divorce, God's grace has provided divine solutions to every difficult situation that a failed marriage and divorce can bring.

For those who have divorced and remarried contrary to the Scripture, you should remain in the marriage relationship and focus on growing spiritually. Through confession of sin according to 1 John 1:9, any believer who finds themselves in an adulterous marriage and confesses that decision as sin to God the Father is forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NASB)

No matter how many sins and failures have gone into your marriage, seeking a divorce should not be your first option. You should continue in the consistent intake and application of Bible doctrine and grow spiritually. Spiritual growth is the key to success in any marriage, no matter what has happened earlier.

You should not try to make adjustments for your past failures in marriage, divorce, and remarriage, but remain in your current relationship. As you learn Bible doctrine, your current relationship will become more clear according to God's plan for your life. For any future decision to be a good decision, it must be based on *epignosis* Bible doctrine in the right lobe of your soul. Let divine viewpoint thinking determine your next steps.

For those self-righteous, arrogant or legalistic types that just can't help judging others who have committed adultery or been divorced, they are opposing God's grace. They will receive divine discipline as God determines. Matt. 7:1-2; Luke 6:37.

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you." (Matthew 7:1-2, NASB)

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned." (Luke 6:37, NASB)

Legalism is self-righteous arrogance. Legalism is looking down at the adulterer and in their self-righteousness judging them. Such people feel superior and attempt to step in for God and render condemnation. That is the opposite of grace orientation. If someone is angry and bitter toward those who have committed adultery or divorced, then they are judging them. If Jesus Christ died spiritually on the Cross for all the sins of mankind, then He died for the sins of adultery.

Divorce in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the man always divorced the woman. In the Old Testament, a legal divorce was certified by a legal written document with the husband's signature stamped or sealed in the presence of at least two witnesses. The signed divorce document was then delivered to the wife.

In Deuteronomy 24:1, "some indecency" refers to any reason that displeased the husband as an excuse to divorce and marry someone to whom he had become attracted. This is called a divorce scheme and includes any false pretext or hypocrisy that will provide the husband the divorce that he desires. Deuteronomy 24:1 is not talking about adultery which was a crime punishable by stoning to death, if convicted. Deut. 22:20-21. The same phrase is used in Deuteronomy 23:14 and also does not refer to adultery.



“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,” (Deuteronomy 24:1, NASB)

“But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin, then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you.” (Deuteronomy 22:20-21, NASB)

“Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.” (Deuteronomy 23:14, NASB)

In Deuteronomy 24:2, because the wife is the innocent victim of a divorce scheme, this constitutes a biblical divorce and means the wife has the right to remarry. Under the Mosaic Law, divorce was abused and distorted because there were many possible reasons for “some indecency.” In the Old Testament, a husband who wanted to divorce his wife would get her to touch some dead animal or the clothes of someone who had died or go to a funeral. He would then immediately send for a judge and declare his wife unclean. Mal. 2:11-17; Lev. 5, 7, 10, 11, 13; Num. 19; Deut. 23.

“and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife,” (Deuteronomy 24:2, NASB)

In Deuteronomy 24:3-4, the exception is that she may not remarry husband #1 if there was a marriage in between, even if husband #2 dies or divorces her legitimately. In Deuteronomy 24:3-4, the “latter husband” is husband #2 and the “former husband” is husband #1.

“and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 24:3-4, NASB)

“Since she has been defiled” means she was defiled in the mind of husband #1. She did nothing wrong here. Husband #1 was short-circuited sexually because she had been with another man. She was not defiled so far as her second marriage, but with regard to her first husband, she was defiled. Husband #1 is vulnerable to the mental attitude sins of hatred, jealousy, and bitterness because of husband #2. Husband #1 would also be hypersensitive regarding his sexual ability in comparison to husband #2.

In Deuteronomy 24:4, “bring sin on the land” refers to a maximum number of incompatible marriages in the nation due to either adultery or divorce schemes. Because marriage is one of the Divine Institutions, it is important to the stability of family life and stability of a nation.

Marriage Between Believer and Unbeliever

Marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is prohibited. However, if you are a believer and your spouse is an unbeliever, this situation is no excuse for dissolving the marriage. According to 1 Corinthians 7:12, just because you get saved and your spouse remains unsaved is not biblical grounds for divorce! 2 Cor. 6:14.

“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.” (1 Corinthians 7:12, NASB)

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness,



or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14, NASB)

In 1 Corinthians 7:13, it states that if a woman who is a believer has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce her husband. This is a case for either the husband or the wife as believers who are married to an unbeliever. Neither believer can use the unbelief of their spouse as grounds for divorce. This is because the laws of divine establishment state that marriage is for both believers and unbelievers alike.

“And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.” (1 Corinthians 7:13, NASB)

In 1 Corinthians 7:14, the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his believing wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. This does not mean they are saved by proxy. It means that they are under blessing by association as stated by the phrase “for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.”

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.” (1 Corinthians 7:14, NASB)

If the marriage bond is broken in a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, God only allows divorce to be done by the unbelieving spouse. 1 Cor. 7:15.

“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.” (1 Corinthians 7:15, NASB)

In 1 Corinthians 7:16-17, a mandate is presented for the believing spouse to continue in the personal evangelism toward their marriage partner based on their unconditional love for them. This is no different than the believer’s mandate to be a witness for Jesus Christ to the unbelieving world through their ambassadorship as part of their royal priesthood for the Church Age. Those married to unbelieving spouses should continue to be a positive example to their spouses and their children of what the Word of God can do to someone and through someone. They should continue to present the Gospel and Bible doctrine to their spouses under unconditional love whenever the opportunity arises.

“For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.” (1 Corinthians 7:16-17, NASB)

When a Marriage Fails

When a marriage fails, there are really three options. The first option is to continue in the marriage for the sake of properly raising the children or for other reasons.

The second option is separation with no right of remarriage. There is a difference biblically between the concept of divorce and that of separation. Civil laws of legal separation often confuse this issue. Biblical separation is any justified separation, but separation does not give the right of remarriage, only reconciliation to the marriage partner. Valid reasons for separation include physical abuse, fear of serious physical harm or death, or fear of physical abuse of the children.

The third option is divorce with right of remarriage. This word means “freedom to remarry.” Whenever the Bible gives the right of divorce, it gives the freedom to remarry, with one exception where a spouse cannot remarry their first spouse after having married another. Deut. 24:4.



“then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 24:4, NASB)

Conclusions

The Word of God says that divorce with the right of remarriage in the Church Age is based only on adultery, desertion, being the victim of the divorce scheme, or by a previous spouse remarrying or dying. Scripture is silent on other legitimate reasons for divorce and does not give the right of remarriage except if the guilty spouse dies or remarries. The guilty party of a divorce does not have the right of remarriage. If the guilty party does marry, they have created an adulterous marriage.

The attitude of many people and religions toward a divorced couple has been judging, rejection, and ostracism. This is legalism. God’s grace demands acceptance. We are to pray for them that the divorced couple would focus on the intake and application of Bible doctrine. We should pray for their recovery through spiritual growth.

For those who have discovered their spouse has committed adultery, they don’t have to get a divorce. The innocent spouse may wish to continue the marriage. Adultery is a sin and once forgiven, no longer remains an issue. If they choose to remain married, the spiritual solution would be that they should seek concentrated spiritual growth together through the intake and application of Bible doctrine. This is the divine solution. This spiritual growth can enable the couple to regain their love rapport. 1 Cor. 7:27.

“Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:27, NASB)

For adulterous marriages that follow a divorce where one of the spouses was the guilty party in a divorce due to adultery, they should also seek spiritual growth together through the intake and application of Bible doctrine. This converts the adulterous marriage to a purified and successful marriage.

Following divorce for any reason, the believer should focus their time on spiritual growth to allow time to heal and allow the Holy Spirit to rehabilitate their soul. For those who divorce or separate because of life-threatening situations, this time of spiritual growth will allow them to heal the physical and mental trauma in single status.