

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT DIVORCE AND RE-MARRIAGE?

Man Is A Sinner

The subject of divorce and re-marriage must begin with this one basic scriptural truth: **man is sinful.**

Romans 3:10-12 *As it is written, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Isaiah 64:6 *.....all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*

The **most righteous people** we know are **still sinners**. Sometimes righteous people **lie**. (Abraham lied about his relationship with Sara.) Sometimes righteous people **swear**. (Peter swore in his denial of Jesus Christ.) Sometimes righteous people **commit adultery**. (David committed adultery with Bathsheba and yet God called David, *“A man after my own heart.”*)

Man has **always** fallen short of God’s ideal! This is why God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to die on a cross for our sins. (**John 3:16**)

God’s Ideal For Marriage

Marriage was instituted by God Himself in the Garden of Eden. (**Genesis 2:23-24**)

God’s ideal for marriage is that one man and one woman be married for this one lifetime.

“Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” (Jesus, Matthew 19:4-6)

Just as man has **“fallen short”** of God’s glory on a lot of things, man has fallen short of God’s glory, God’s ideal when it comes to marriage.

Three Basic Positions on the Issue of Divorce and Remarriage

Here are the scriptures which make reference to the subject of divorce/remarriage.

[Matthew 5:31,32](#)

[Matthew 19:1-12](#)

[Mark 10:2-12](#)

[Luke 16:18](#)

[Romans 7:2,3](#)

[I Corinthians 7: 10-16, 39,40](#)

From these scriptures come three basic interpretations of New Testament teaching regarding divorce.

Interpretation 1: Some understand that Jesus' teachings permit the "innocent" person to remarry if their mate has severed the marriage covenant by committing adultery. ([Matthew 5:32](#) and [Matthew 19:9](#) are interpreted as the "permissive" text by this group.

Interpretation 2: Some understand a second grounds for remarriage to be in the instance the "innocent" person was deserted or divorced by a non-Christian mate. ([I Corinthians 7:10-16](#) is the passage this group cites as "permissive" grounds for remarriage)

Interpretation 3: Some believe the scriptural grounds for divorce and remarriage is much broader than the first two positions.

This group points to last statement in [I Corinthians 7:15](#):

God has called us to live in peace.

They also cite Jesus' words in [Matthew 19:11](#) "*Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.*"

This group argues that while God's ideal is that one man and one woman remain married until parted by death, many couples are total mismatches and cannot live up to this ideal. They believe if a couple cannot live in peace ([I Cor. 7:15](#)) that God is merciful in such situations.

This group poses some interesting questions:

- (1) Does God expect a wife who lives with a drunkard husband who abuses her and or her children to remain bound to that man until death no matter what? (Ephesians 5:25, 28)
- (2) What if a man is married to a woman who has no interest in sex and refuses to fulfill her marital responsibilities in this area? (I Corinthians 7:4,5)
- (3) What about cases of desertion where no sexual sin is involved? (I Corinthians 7:15a)

What Did Jesus Teach About Divorce? (Matthew 19:1-12)

Divorce and re-marriage has been a problem almost since the first marriage in the Garden of Eden.

Divorce and remarriage was a problem in Moses' day.

Matthew 19:7,8 “Why then ,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.”

Jesus' teaching on divorce is clear. He restricted divorce under most circumstances, and He forbade the remarriage of those who divorce on improper grounds, calling such a marriage adultery: *“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”* (Matthew 19:9)

The word “unfaithfulness” Jesus used in this verse comes from the Greek word, *porneia* (fornication) which includes all kinds of gross sexual immorality or misconduct.

God's utter hatred of divorce is very clear in the scriptures.

"I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel...." (Malachi 2:16)

Is divorce worse than other sins? God's word does NOT classify divorce as being worse than other sins. In God's eyes, sin is sin. There is no such thing as a good sin.

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Is divorce worse in its consequences than other sins? Obviously the answer to that is yes.

Lying, gossiping, cheating, stealing, pride, lust, a critical spirit and many other sins are just as much a sin as divorce. But the consequences of those sins may not be nearly so great.

God hates divorce because divorce destroys the most sacred of all human relationships, the marriage of a man and woman. Consequently divorce then destroys a family. The destruction of a family weakens the Church and the community. This weakens the society which weakens the nation.

One only has to look as far as our own country to see the devastating effects of divorce.

It is easy to see why God hates divorce!

In summary there are TWO GROUNDS for divorce and remarriage:

- (1) Marital unfaithfulness
- (2) Desertion or Divorce initiated by a non-believing spouse.

Unscriptural Teachings Regarding Divorce and Remarriage

Erroneous Teaching 1 Some churches teach the only way a divorce/remarried person can be forgiven is to divorce their new spouse and remarry their former spouse.

What the Bible says: *If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband who divorced her is NOT ALLOWED TO MARRY HER AGAIN AFTER SHE HAS BEEN DEFILED. That would be DETESTABLE in the eyes of the LORD. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)*

Erroneous Teaching 2

Some teach that if a person divorces for any reason other than adultery and remarries they are “*living in adultery*” and therefore can never be forgiven and thus are eternally lost.

What the Bible teaches: The term “*living in adultery*” is **NOT** found anywhere in the Bible.

Jesus teaches there is only one sin that can never be forgiven and that is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

“And so I tell you, EVERY SIN and BLASPHEMY will be FORGIVEN men, but the BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE SPIRIT will NOT BE FORGIVEN.” (Matthew 12:31)

As Christians we must exercise extreme caution in labeling anyone as “spiritually unsalvageable,” including those who have been divorced and remarried on non-biblical grounds.

Does God Forgive Those Who Have Been Divorced and Remarried?

Does God forgive the murderer, the rapist, the thief, and not the one who has divorced and re-married?

What is a non-Christian man or non-Christian woman who divorced and remarried? ANSWER: a sinner

What is a Christian man or Christian woman who divorced and remarried? ANSWER: a sinner

Does God not forgive SINNERS?

In cases where divorce took place on non-biblical grounds where the guilty parties repent of their sin, the grace of God is operative at the point of their repentance.

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, HE IS FAITHFUL and JUST and will FORGIVE us our SINS and purify us from ALL unrighteousness.

(NOTE: John wrote this letter to CHRISTIANS .)

Psalms 103:3who FORGIVES ALL YOUR SINS and heals all your diseases.

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Isaiah 1:18 Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord, "*Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*"

Isaiah 43:25 "*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for MY OWN SAKE, and remembers your sins no more."*

Matthew 12:31 "*And so I tell you, EVERY SIN and blasphemy will be FORGIVEN men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.*"

If a man or woman brings their sin of divorce and remarriage under the cleansing blood of Christ, regardless of whether they were a Christian or non-Christian when the divorce and remarriage occurred, regardless of whether the divorce was on biblical grounds or non-biblical grounds, [THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SINS!!!](#)

Summary

The issue of divorce and remarriage has always been debated. It was debated in Moses' day. It was debated in Jesus' day. It is debated today. And it will continue to be debated until the Lord comes again.

While we may never come to an understanding of everything regarding the divorce issue and have all our questions answered, these things we can know.

One, [GOD HATES DIVORCE!](#) (Malachi 2:16)

Two, GOD desires that [one man and one woman](#) be married for [one lifetime](#), until parted by death. (Matthew 19:4-6)

Three, GOD [permits divorce and remarriage](#) in [two](#) instances:

- a. Marital unfaithfulness. (Matthew 19:9)
- b. Desertion or divorce was initiated by an unbelieving mate. (I Corinthians 7:15)

Four, GOD commands that if we divorce [we should remain unmarried](#). (I Corinthians 7:10-17)

Five, GOD'S word teaches us if we remarry after divorcing for [non-biblical grounds](#), we [commit adultery](#). (Matthew 19:9)

Six, GOD'S word teaches us [we are all sinners](#). (Romans 3:23)

Seven, GOD'S word teaches us that as sinners we can be forgiven of [all](#) our sins, including the sin of divorce and remarriage. (I John 1:9)

For Further Study

Divorce and Remarriage by Tony Evans, Moody Publishers

Divorce and Remarriage: “A Redemptive Theology” by Rubel Shelly
Leafwood Publishers

Divorce and Remarriage In the Bible by Jay Adams, Zondervan Books

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