

BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE  
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Let me tell you what I am going to talk about this morning:

What Jesus said about marriage and divorce

Whether or not Jesus was a liberal or conservative when it came to the issue of divorce

The Biblical guidelines for marriage and divorce

How do I handle my own particular case

The bottom-line issue is not how to get out of a marriage but how to enjoy the fullness and permanence of one.

The "Exception Clause"

Both Mark (10:10-12) and Luke (17:18) quote Jesus as making no allowances for divorce whatsoever.

Yet, Matthew (5:31-32) recorded Jesus as saying that it was OK to get a divorce if your spouse committed "marital unfaithfulness" ("eros"). Why the discrepancy?

THE PHARISEES FIRST QUESTION TO JESUS

"Who's right, Jesus? Hillel the Liberal or Shemi the Conservative" (Matthew 19:1-3).

(This is a set up question from the only Old Testament passage which directly deals with the issue of divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). How we interpret the words "finds something indecent about her" greatly affects our concept of hard or easy divorce.)

JESUS ANSWER TO THE PHARISEES

"Haven't you read that God intends for marriage to be permanent?" (Matthew 19:4-6).

THE PHARISEES SECOND QUESTION TO JESUS

"If divorce is not OK, then why did Moses allow it?" (Matthew 19:7 and Deuteronomy 24:1).

JESUS SECOND ANSWER TO THE PHARISEES

"Moses permitted divorce because of hard-hearted people. No one is to divorce except for marital unfaithfulness by their partner. A man who divorces his wife and remarries both commits and causes the woman he marries to commit adultery" (Matthew 19:8-9).

(The Greek term, "marital unfaithfulness," covers a multitude of sexual sins.)

THE DISCIPLES "IMPLIED" QUESTION TO JESUS

"If this is the seriousness of the marriage relationship, it is probably best never to get married. (Matthew 19:10).

JESUS ANSWER TO THE DISCIPLES

"I know that this is hard; but, the children of the Kingdom of God will receive it. After all, sex and marriage are not the most important things in life. Furthering the Kingdom of Heaven trumps all else" (Matthew 19:11-12).

SOME BASIC BIBLICAL GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER IN SORTING OUT THE ISSUES OF DIVORCE AND

## REMARRIAGE

1. Christian couples are to remain married in order to uphold God's ideal of the permanence of marriage (Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).
2. A Christian married to one who is not a Christian is to remain married as long as the spouse wants to be married (1 Corinthians 7:12-14). He or she may lead his or her spouse to Christ.
3. There are essentially only two reasons for a Biblical divorce:
  - a. Marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 5:31-32);
  - b. An unbelieving spouse who wants out of the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:15-16).
4. Christians who choose to divorce have only two future courses of action:
  - a. Remain unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:10);
  - b. Reconcile with their partner (1 Corinthians 7:10).
5. If your previous partner has remarried, reconciliation is impossible. There is freedom to remarry.
6. It is a sin to remarry without the proper grounds for divorce since in God's eyes the person is still married—an act of adultery is committed by remarrying. (Matthew 5:32; 19:8-9).
7. It is a sin to marry someone who has been divorced without the proper grounds for divorce (Matthew 5:32; 19:8-9).
8. Biblical divorce always includes the right of remarriage (1 Corinthians 7:15, 39).
9. In certain cases it is God's will to remain unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).
10. When a spouse dies, there is freedom to remarry (Romans 7:1-2).
11. "I hate divorce and I also hate a man beating up his wife" (Malachi 2:16).
12. "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

## WHAT ABOUT MY CASE?

- "What about my husband who physically abuses me and/or the children?"
- "What about the lazy, dead-beat husband who won't work?"
- "What if I am married to a person with an incurable personality disorder, that I never should have married in the first place, whose aberrant behavior is destroying our family?"
- "What if I can handle my spouse's angry and belittling verbal abuse—but I see my children being mentally and emotionally destroyed before my very eyes?"
- "What if my husband puts a gun in my mouth and threatens to shoot me?"
- "What if I don't love my spouse anymore?"
- "What if my spouse is involved in illegal behavior (gambling, drugs, gun running, etc) which could get us all in trouble?"
- "What if my husband and I are divorced, but I think we made a mistake. I want to reconcile but he has remarried. Is it all right to pray that his marriage will fail and that God will bring him back to me?"
- "What if I got divorced without Biblical grounds and I have remarried. Should I get another divorce and remarry my first spouse?"

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MARRIAGE/DIVORCE/REMARRIAGE ISSUE IS NOT HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY EXTRICATE ONESELF FROM A BAD MARRIAGE; BUT, HOW TO ACHIEVE A SUCCESSFUL ONE (MATTHEW 19:4-6).

God's ideal marriage is the total commitment of the total person for the total life (Genesis 2:18-24).