

## God's Law on Divorce

I want to do a study of what God's Word says on the subject of divorce. The main chapters I want to look at are Matthew 19, I Corinthians 7, and Matthew 5.

### Matthew 19:1-9

When Jesus was in Judea teaching the multitudes, the Pharisees wanted to test Him. They asked Him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason. Jesus answered them by explaining that God's plan for marriage was one man to one woman for life. The Pharisees asked why Moses allowed for divorce under the Law of Moses. Jesus replied that God **allowed** it, but it was not His plan. He then laid down a law. Anyone who divorced and remarried was committing adultery. The only exception to remarriage was if the divorce was for the cause of fornication. In that situation, the innocent spouse was allowed to remarry.

**Conclusion:** Based on this passage of Scripture, I can conclude that remarriage is not allowed for a divorced person unless the reason for the divorce was because their spouse committed fornication.

### I Corinthians 7:1-16

Apparently, the Christians in Corinth had some questions about marriage and Paul wanted to address those questions. He explained that one purpose for marriage was to avoid fornication. When a man and woman were married, they were to give each other due affection and not deprive each other unless it was agreed upon for a short time for prayer and fasting. Paul then addressed certain groups—all unmarried, all married, and Christians married to non-Christians:

- Unmarried—Paul told them it would be good for them in the current time of persecution not to marry unless they could not resist fornication.
- Married—Paul said a wife was not to divorce her husband and a husband was not to divorce his wife. **But** if they did, they were to remain unmarried or be reconciled to their spouse.
- Christians married to non-Christians—Paul told the Christian spouses not to divorce their non-Christian spouses. Being married to a non-Christian did not make them or their children unclean. **But**, if the non-Christian spouse wanted a divorce, the Christian was **allowed** to give them a divorce.

**Conclusion:** Based on this passage of Scripture, I can conclude that a husband or wife should not divorce their spouse. But God does allow it with a consequence. They may not remarry unless Jesus' exception in Matthew 19:9 applies.

### Matthew 5:31

During Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, He addressed marriage. He said whoever divorced his wife for any reason except fornication caused her to commit adultery.

**Conclusion:** Jesus was giving a warning. No matter what the reason is for divorce, the man and woman are putting themselves in a difficult position. What are the chances that each will remarry—therefore committing adultery unless Jesus' exception in Matthew 19:9 applies? This reminds me of I Samuel chapter 8 when the Israelites wanted a king. God warned them about it first. He told them they and their children would become the king's slaves. He warned them but He still allowed it.

### Additional Thoughts

- Although God's plan for marriage is one man to one woman for life (Genesis 2:24), there are situations where God requires divorce in order to make things right (i.e. repentance). Therefore, we cannot make a blanket statement that "divorce is a sin."

- For example:
  - In Ezra 10, the Israelites divorced their foreign wives because it was unlawful for them to have married them.
  - If a Christian marries unlawfully, they need to divorce and get out of that unlawful marriage.
  - If a non-Christian wants to become a Christian and they are in an unlawful marriage, they need to divorce and get out of that unlawful marriage.
- Just because God allows for divorce is not an excuse to get out of a marriage I do not want to be in. For example, if I want to divorce my spouse because:
  - I want to marry someone else, I am sinning because I have a lack of respect for marriage and I am selfish for wanting to be with someone else.
  - I want to be free to commit fornication, I am sinning because I just want to fulfill my lusts.
  - They got sick and I want out, I am sinning for being selfish and uncompassionate.
  - In all of these examples, I am the one breaking my marriage vows which would also be a sin. In every divorce, there is a breaking of marriage vows on the part of one or both parties. If I divorce because my spouse committed fornication, my spouse broke the marriage vows—not me—therefore breaking the covenant. If I divorce because my spouse is a physical danger to me or my children or forces me into immoral acts, my spouse broke the marriage vows—not me—therefore breaking the covenant.

### **Overall Conclusion**

Although God's plan for marriage has always been one man to one woman for life (Genesis 2:24), we know life does not always go as planned. We may start out with a wonderful spouse and find out they are not who they claimed to be. We may marry unlawfully before we became a Christian, learn the truth, and realize we are in an adulterous relationship. We may marry unlawfully as a Christian only to find out later it was not a lawful marriage. We may marry someone who is selfish and commits adultery. God allows for divorce but divorcees beware. You may not remarry unless your divorce was because of fornication.

Divorce is a subject that should never come up in a marriage. If it does, it is because someone is sinning. If I am a Christian, I will not want a divorce. If I am married to a Christian, they will not want a divorce. If we all try our best to be faithful children of God, divorce will never be an issue we have to discuss.