



FAITH

COMMUNITY CHURCH



TO GOD BE THE GLORY

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Divorce

God hates divorce. He hates it because it always involves unfaithfulness to the solemn covenant of marriage that two partners have entered into before Him, and because it brings harmful consequences to those partners and to their children (Mal. 2:14-16).

Divorce in scripture is permitted only because of man's sin. Since divorce is only a concession to man's sin and is not a part of God's original plan for marriage, all believers should hate divorce as God does and pursue it only when there is no other recourse.

In Matthew 19:3-9, Christ teaches that divorce is an accommodation to man's sin that violates God's original purpose for the intimate and permanence of the marriage bond.

He taught that God allows divorce only because of "hardness of heart" (Matthew 19:8). Realizing this, the believer should never consider divorce except in specific situations that the Bible lays out, and even in those situations it should only be pursued reluctantly because there is no other recourse. The only New Testament grounds for divorce are sexual sin, or desertion by an unbeliever. The first is found in Jesus' use of the Greek word *porneia* (Matt. 5:32; 19:9).

This is a general term that encompasses sexual sin such as adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and incest. When one partner violates the unity and intimacy of marriage by sexual sin and forsakes his or her covenant obligation – the faithful partner is placed in an extremely difficult situation. After all means are exhausted to bring the sinning partner to repentance, the Bible permits release for the faithful partner through divorce (Matt. 5:32; 1 Cor. 7:15).

The second reason for permitting divorce is in cases where an unbelieving mate does not desire to be married to his or her believing spouse (1 Cor. 7:12-15). When an unbeliever desires to leave (divorce), then divorce is permitted in such instances. "Let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases." (1 Cor. 7:15)

Remarriage

Remarriage is permitted for the faithful partner only when the divorce was on biblical grounds. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus includes remarriage as part of the exception statement. The faithful spouse who divorces because of adultery, therefore, not only has legitimate grounds for dissolving the marriage but for remarriage as well. That means that the believer will not be guilty of adultery if he or she remarries. In fact, a biblical divorce makes it clear that the faithful partner is free to remarry, but only in the Lord (Matt. 19:9; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:27,39). Those who divorce on any other grounds have sinned against God and their partners, and for them to marry another is an act of “adultery” (Mark 10:11-12). This is why Paul says that a believing woman who sinfully divorces “should remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband (1 Cor. 7:10-11). If she repents from her sin of unbiblical divorce the true fruits of that repentance would be to seek reconciliation with her former husband (Matt. 5:23-24). The same is true for a man who divorces unbiblically (1 Cor. 7:11). The only time such a person could remarry another is if the former spouse remarries, proves to be an unbeliever, or dies, in which case reconciliation would no longer be possible.

The Bible also gives a word of caution to anyone who is considering marriage to a divorcee. If the divorce was not on biblical grounds and there is still a responsibility to reconcile, the person who marries the divorcee is considered an adulterer (Mark 10:12).

One of the beautiful things about being a child of God is the grace that He offers to us as sinners. If you are reading this and have realized that you have sinned in one or more of these areas in the past, then be sure to thank God for His wonderful forgiveness and mercy to sinners like us. Also, if there is something you can do to make the sin of the past right in the eyes of God, such as seeking reconciliation with your former spouse, then it would only be right as a believer as well as pleasing to God to pursue that course of action. However, if you have divorced unbiblically, and if you have remarried unbiblically, you are called to continue in your current marriage and be faithful to your spouse and to God so that the marriage you are in is one that is honoring and glorifying to Him. Your past sins may have abounded, but God offers you forgiveness for those past sins, and He calls you to be faithful today.