

Divorce and Remarriage

Biblical guidelines for navigating divorce and remarriage.

Remarriage is the act of marrying someone other than your spouse after a divorce.

Marriage is sacred covenant before the Lord and must be honored. We know that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) and that Christians should not separate or divorce.

10 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband 11 (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. - 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

The Apostle Paul is addressing this charge to believers. Two Christians who are married should not divorce. Additionally, if Believers have disobeyed the Lord and divorced, then they should not remarry.

However, are there exceptions? Is remarriage always disallowed? Paul addresses a situation where a Christian is married to an unbeliever. In this example, Paul proposes that a Believer, after remaining faithful and giving full support to their marriage, is no longer bound to the marriage vows and thus is free to remarry if their unbelieving spouse divorces them.

But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. - 1 Corinthians 7:15

Additionally, Jesus opens the door to remarriage when the divorce was the result of unrepentant adultery.

31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. - Matthew 5:31-32

Notice that adultery is grounds for a Christian to divorce their spouse. Additionally, if a divorced woman remarries or if a man marries a divorced woman, they commit adultery. However, Jesus spoke the words, "except on the ground of sexual immorality."

Jesus also presents this exception in Matthew 19.

And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." - Matthew 19:9, ESV

While divorce is allowed due to marital infidelity, it does not mean that divorce is compulsory. Forgiveness is always available and should be exercised liberally. If a spouse is repentant for their sin of adultery (including turning from their sin), forgiveness should be extended. After all, this is what God has done for us. Instead of "divorcing" us when we sin against Him, He offers forgiveness. And likewise, God calls us to forgive.

If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him – Luke 17:3

CONCLUSION:

Divorce is not God's plan. If Christians have divorced but have not married another, they should approach one another in repentance and forgiveness, seeking to restore their marriage. A divorced Christian is not free to marry another except in the clearly allowable situations presented in Scripture. If you have already remarried, honor God in your current marriage and do not divorce. Finally, be led by the Holy Spirit, live with a clear conscience before the Lord, and honor Him in all things.