

MARRIAGE

DIVORCE

REMARRIAGE

A Summary of What the Bible REALLY Teaches

I. MARRIAGE

- A. Marriage is a creation ordinance. Gen. 2:21-24
- B. Marriage is for life (permanent). Matt. 19:1-6 & Mk. 10:1-9
- C. Marriage creates “one flesh” from God’s viewpoint. Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5-6, Mk. 10:7-8
- D. Marriage cannot be dissolved from God’s viewpoint. Matt. 19:6, Mk. 10:9
- E. Marriage is to be an earthly model of the relationship of Christ and His church and of God to Israel. Eph. 5:30-32, Hos. 2:16, 19-20
- F. Marriage is a solemn covenant vowed before God. Eccl. 5:4-7

II. MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

- A. Husband and wife are to be mutually submitted, one to the other, in the fear of God. Eph. 5:21
- B. Wives are to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord and respect them. Eph. 5:22-24, 5:33
- C. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and give themselves for her. Eph. 5:25
- D. Marriage is a “great mystery” of heaven being lived out to the glory of God on earth. Eph. 5:32

III. DIVORCE

- A. God does not recognize man’s civil divorces for spiritual purposes because the two are “one flesh” which “God hath joined.” Matt. 19:6, Mk. 10:8-9, Rom. 7:2-3, I Cor. 7:39
- B. Civil divorces under mans’ law are due exclusively to “hardness of heart,” are not God’s will, nor are they sanctioned by God the Father or Christ the Son. Matt. 19:7-8, Mk. 10:11-12, Rom. 7:2-3, I Cor. 7:39
- C. Civil divorces under mans’ law serve only to protect the social order on earth required by the hardness of men’s hearts. God does not “wink” at or excuse divorce just because the law of man permits it. Deut. 24:1, Matt. 19:8
- D. A true follower of Christ is not free to divorce for any cause, including adultery. Neither, from God’s viewpoint, are unbelievers, for they also were made “one flesh” by God. I Cor. 7:10, I Cor. 7:39
- E. If there is adultery after consummation of the marriage, forgiveness is mandatory. If the guilty party is unrepentant or repeats, forgiveness is still required regardless of whether there is full reconciliation of relationship. This is the higher N.T. standard. Matt. 6:14-15, I Cor. 7:10-11, Col. 3:12-13
- F. Divorce is an act of treachery against one’s spouse but a treasonous act against the Kingdom of God. Mal. 2:13-17

- G. God hates divorce! God’s hatred of divorce is not primarily due to the unfathomable pain it causes to the parties and their family, but to the damage it does to HIS Kingdom on earth. It perverts the godly seed. Mal. 2:15-16
- H. God will not consider or bless a person, people, congregation, ministry or nation that hardens the heart in divorce, unless there is true repentance. Mal. 2:13-17
- I. Is there any exception to God’s clear prohibition of divorce? Yes... but only if “pornea” or fornication is discovered at the time of the consummation of the marriage that had previously been undisclosed. This “exception” is only mentioned in the book of Matthew, which scholars believe was written to a Jewish audience. This was the Jewish marriage practice and is affirmed by God in the relationship between Christ and the church. At this time, professing Christians and Israel are “married” in the sense of exchanging vows, but the marriage has not been consummated. Paul declares, he seeks to “present you a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Cor. 11:2). But if we are not chaste (walking in holiness and purity) at Christ’s coming, He can “put us away” for pornea or Spiritual fornication. There is no blanket exception permitting divorce for adultery. This is the only interpretation that brings consistency to the entire Scripture. Matt. 5:32, Matt. 19:9

IV. IF DIVORCED

- A. Remain unmarried, or I Cor. 7:10-11
- B. Be reconciled to your spouse I Cor. 7:11

V. IF DIVORCED or DESERTED by UNBELIEVING SPOUSE

- A. You may permit but not encourage leaving. I Cor. 7:15-16
- B. You are not required to pursue so as to keep things constantly stirred up, but are called to peace. I Cor. 7:15
- C. You are NOT free to remarry, because God made you “one flesh.” (See “IF DIVORCED”) I Cor. 7:10-11

VI. REMARRIAGE

- A. Remarriage is not an option for a true follower of Christ, unless your spouse dies. This is because you are joined as “one flesh” by and before God, regardless of feelings, and that “one flesh” status continues “until death do us part.” Rom. 7:1-3, I Cor. 7:10-11; 7:39
- B. Remarriage while your spouse is still living constitutes “adultery.” Rom. 7:1-3, Mk. 10:11-12
- C. God wants you holy and chaste before Him more than He wants you happy. The first call of a Christian believer is to “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Pursuit of holiness must always preempt pursuit of happiness. Lev. 20:7, Col. 1:22, I Pet. 1:13-16, II Cor. 11:2, Matt. 6:33

- D. The penalty for sexual immorality, adultery and fornication, as with all sin, is eternal damnation, unless there is true repentance. I Cor. 6:9-10, Rev. 21:8, Gal. 5:19-21
- E. Remarriage after one's spouse is dead must be "only in the Lord," meaning only to a true follower of Christ, otherwise you will be "unequally yoked." I Cor. 7:39, II Cor. 6:14
- F. God will never lead a person to divorce and remarry when His Word clearly declares such "adultery." This is motivated solely by the "flesh." Gal. 5:19

VII. REPENTANCE

- A. If you have committed adultery by divorcing and re-marrying while your spouse was still living, you must repent, as for all sin, for your eternal destiny is at stake. I Cor. 6:9-10, II Pet. 3:9
- B. Repentance requires...
 - 1. Acknowledgment and confession I Jn. 1:8-10
 - 2. Godly sorrow II Cor. 7:10
 - 3. Change of mind and heart leading to change of behavior. Acts 26:20
- C. What behavioral change is necessary to repent of adultery? This is the most difficult issue. There are only two possible alternatives, but not necessarily equally valid.
 - 1. Alternative 1

Godly sorrow coupled with confession to God, the church, and your family, with a deep conviction never to repeat the process.

The problem with Alternative 1 is that it leaves a person in what would appear to be a continuing state of adultery, i.e., if it was adultery entering the remarriage, it is adultery to remain in the remarriage. However, to walk away from the remarriage results in breaking yet another vow before God and potential echoing consequences with children, law, other relationships, etc. Whether Alternative 1 constitutes full repentance must be solemnly considered in light of eternal ramifications.

- 2. Alternative 2

The only other alternative is to leave, or divorce (under man's civil law). Some adulterously remarried couples have chosen to agree with God's assessment and sever relationship, entering into loving and fair agreement as to how to deal with dividing assets, care and custody of children, support, etc. Others have determined to continue living together under the same roof while not engaging in marital relations. This is both

unrealistic and continues to display the appearance of a continuing adulterous relationship, thus appearing to condone remarriage while your original spouse still lives.

There is no biblical case or illustration directly on point illustrating such repentance. The closest is found in Ezra 9-10 where Israel, in a state of rebellion for a generation, had inter-married with pagan nations contrary to God's express command. This passage reveals what they did when confronted with the Word of God and conviction by the Holy Spirit to purge unrighteousness from their midst.

Note: Some contend that spouses subsequently adulterously remarried should divorce their current spouses and return to their former spouses. Deut. 24:3-4 expressly called such practice "abomination before the Lord". Some will say it is no longer abomination because we are now under "grace" in the New Testament era. But God is not like us. He said, "I change not" (Mal. 3:6). Others say Jesus voided Moses' reluctant permission of divorce in Deut. 24:1 (Matt. 19:3-9) and therefore voided the stricture against remarrying a former spouse. The problem with this is that Jesus' words voided only the permission to divorce; He said nothing about the restriction of remarrying a former spouse. Some contend Jer. 3:1-20 tells Israel to "remarry" an original spouse. This contention is not accurate, since Jer. 3 refers only to a spouse (Israel) committing whoredom while married. Even though God says He gave Israel a bill of divorcement (vs. 8), this was because of "pornea" during betrothal, not after consummation, and God seeks Israel's repentance and return while neither God nor Israel has remarried. This is an important distinction. However, even if it is concluded that a divorced and remarried person must not return to the original spouse, this in no way authenticates a current remarried status if the first spouse is still living.

You must be fully persuaded by the Holy Spirit as you submit humbly and prayerfully to the Word of God (the Bible) as final authority for your life. But you must repent! What repentance requires is between your humble heart and God who desires you to be holy and without blame that He might present you as a chaste bride for His Son, Jesus Christ, at His soon return, culminating in the greatest bridal feast of all time...

the “Wedding Supper of the Lamb.” “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13). Remember, His grace is sufficient for you, for His strength will be made perfect in your weakness (I Cor. 12:9). God will provide strength and courage to enable you to fully repent, trusting the consequences to Him. Remember—God did not get you into your current dilemma. Further, God’s mercy will never permit what His Word prohibits.

VIII. LEADERSHIP

- A. Leaders “must be blameless” or above reproach. God established a higher standard for the priesthood.
- B. Until this last generation, a divorced person was deemed by most Christian denominations and churches to be disqualified for pastoral leadership because the status necessarily lowered the standard for righteous living for the people. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (I Cor. 5:6).
- C. A divorced person who was remarried while his/her spouse was living is clearly disqualified from church leadership, since one cannot be “blameless” or “above reproach” and have entered an adulterous remarriage. Repentance is insufficient to re-qualify because “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (I Cor. 5:6).
- D. While all sin is sin, sexual sin is clearly treated differently and more severely when considered in relationship to the life of the church. This is the very reason why the Apostle Paul wrote I Cor. 5,6 and 7 to the church at Corinth. Earthly and human compassion must never override God’s goal of a “glorious church, not having spot, wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27).
- E. A leader must not be a polygamist. When Paul says a man must be “the husband of one wife,” he must mean “married to only one woman at a time.” Otherwise it would rule out someone whose previous spouse died and who then remarried. However, this does not permit the form of polygamy referred to as “serial monogamy,” resulting from the practice of divorce and remarriage while the spouse is still living. From God’s viewpoint, such practice is a form of polygamy, since God continues to see the parties in the first marriage as “one flesh” that He has joined.

I Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:5-7, Lev. 21

I Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:6

FINAL QUESTIONS

Is your heart soft before God? If so, you will readily embrace God's viewpoint and desire to do everything necessary to please Him and conform to your Creator's thoughts and intents for marriage. You will also feel conviction of heart if you are in some way out of His perfect will and therefore in a condition of sin which separates you from Him. Conviction by the Holy Spirit is a strong manifestation of God's grace, for "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance" (Rom. 2:4).

Is your heart hard before God? If, as you read God's clear heart and will as expressed in His Word regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, you find yourself making excuses or angry at God, or are looking for a way out (by seeking someone to tell you what you want to hear) to do what you want rather than what God desires and has commanded, the gentle conviction of the Holy Spirit leading you to repentance will be perceived by you as "condemnation." The problem in thinking is that when we are walking "in the flesh," of which adultery is one expression (Gal. 5:19-21), we are already under condemnation for unrepentant sin, and are at "enmity" with God (Rom. 8:5-8). Stubborn rejection of God's convicting Spirit will lead you to a state of outright rebellion which Jesus called "hardness of heart" (Matt. 19:7-8).

Will Christ find your heart HARD or SOFT? Jesus is returning soon for a bride "holy and without blemish," "not having spot, wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). How will He find you? Will you humble yourself and obey God, obeying instead your fleshly desires, your emotions, the dictates of the culture or some religious group, because of "the hardness of your heart?" Eternal destiny could ride in the balance.

GOD HAS YOUR MARRIAGE ON HIS MIND! It is "a great mystery" but it concerns "Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). Many are hearing and heeding the wooing of the Holy Spirit toward repentance on the near edge of the Second Coming. Will you? "Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart" (Heb. 3:7-19). Do not become one of those who through rebellion "could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:18-19).

How can we say we believe Christ and God the Father if we refuse to believe and conform our ways to their express heart on the very matter described as the "mystery" expressing Christ's relationship to his church on earth? The professing Christian church in America is now in near lock-step rebellion on matters of marriage, divorce and remarriage, having capitulated to the cry of the culture rather than the call of Christ. Which call will you heed?

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SAVE AMERICA Ministries
P.O. Box 70879 • Richmond, VA 23255
(804) 754-1822 • www.saveus.org