

Divorce/ Remarriage



Chapelwood Baptist Church
Worshiping God - Growing People
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Chapelwood Baptist Church

God's View on Divorce/Remarriage

Over two million marriages take place in the United States each year. Marriage and the family were created by God in the Garden of Eden. The Bible teaches that marriage is a permanent relationship between God and one man and one woman committed to each other for life.

The marriage of two Christians is an occasion of great joy. It marks the beginning of a relationship that is second only to our personal relationship with God Himself through Christ. Marriage is used as a description of God's relationship with us.

However, in the United States, roughly half of all marriages now end in divorce. A more detailed look reveals that 50% of first marriages, 67% of second and 74% of third marriages end in divorce.

(Jennifer Baker, Forest Institute of Professional Psychology)

There is a cause-and-effect connection between our faithfulness to the marriage covenant and our relationship with God.

Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel. Malachi 2:13-16

Divorce has many negative effects on families and individuals. Here are a few of them.

Women experiencing divorce face a 30 percent decline in their standard of living. Men show a 10 percent decline. (Demography 30)

The health consequences of divorce are severe. After a diagnosis of cancer, married people are more likely to recover, while the divorced are less likely to recover. (Journal of the American Medical Association 258)

Life expectancies for divorced men and women are significantly lower than for married people. (Family Relations 40)

Divorce and its ensuing ramifications can have a significant and life-altering impact on the well being and subsequent development of children and adolescents. The consequences of divorce impact almost all aspects of a child's life, including the parent-child relationship, emotions and behavior, psychological development, and coping skills. (The Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine)

Those who were unhappy but stayed married were more likely to be happy five years later than those who divorced. (Linda Waite & Maggie Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage*)



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1. God's View On Divorce

Marriage is a relationship established by God. The Bible describes this relationship between the husband, wife and God as a covenant.

Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. Matthew 19:6

Marriage is not your covenant; it is God's covenant. If a covenant is established by God, it can only be ended by God. For this reason if you get a divorce that is not permitted under biblical conditions, and you marry someone else then God says you commit adultery. (Matthew 19:3-9)

"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel. Malachi 2:13-16

God hates divorce, because it represents the breaking of this covenant. There are two biblical reasons for divorce:

1) Sexual immorality

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery. Matthew 19:3-9



When asked the question if "no-fault divorce" is ok, Jesus states that God intends marriage to be a commitment for life. He says that divorce was allowed due to sin and that if anyone divorces their spouse, except for immorality and marries another person, they commit adultery.

What does the Bible consider as immorality? Some examples are incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, fornication; basically any sexual activity outside of marriage.

In the New Testament, the word for immorality or marital unfaithfulness is "pornia". This is the root of the English word pornography, which refers to any kind of sexual activity outside of marriage.

Thus, sexual immorality by a spouse is a permissible concession for ending a marriage by divorce.

2) Abandonment

Abandonment is when a spouse physically leaves or forsakes his or her role in the relationship.

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 1 Corinthians 7:3

Both spouses fulfilling their responsibilities in the marriage is God's plan for marriage. But incompatibility is not grounds for divorce.

A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

God's View on Divorce/Remarriage



If there are irreconcilable differences in a marriage and a separation occurs, the partners must not marry anyone else. From God's perspective, they are still married to each other.

But in cases of abandonment, which may be physically leaving the home or one of the partners forsaking his or her role in the relationship, the Bible does give an option.

a) Abandonment by a non-Christian spouse

A Christian should never marry a non-Christian, as this almost inevitably leads to serious friction in the home.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.
2 Corinthians 6:14

If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ... But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 1 Corinthians 7:12-15

A believer who is married to a non-believer is not obligated to maintain the marriage relationship if the unbeliever elects to leave. Of course, this presumes that the believer has not driven the unbeliever away by failing to be who God wants them to be.

b) Abandonment by a Christian spouse

What if the one abandoning claims to be a Christian?

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:17

If a person refuses to repent of their sin, they are to be treated as a non-believer. Divorce was never in God's plan. It is a concession made for sin.

2. God's View on Remarriage

Not only is the man who divorces his wife committing a sin, he is starting a cycle of sin that will involve several others. If this man's wife remarries, he has caused her to commit adultery. The man who marries that ex-wife also commits adultery.

Why would God ask you to stay committed to a relationship plagued by these irreconcilable differences? From God's perspective, no differences are truly irreconcilable. They may be painful and frustrating but not irreconcilable.

Biblical grounds for divorce is biblical grounds for remarriage. "Not bound" in 1 Corinthians 7:15 means that the individual is no longer bound by a covenant to that relationship and is free to enter another one, assuming the new spouse is a Christian. Biblical grounds for divorce provides the only possibility for remarriage.

Even if your grounds for divorce are legitimate, don't be too quick to cling to your rights. Genuine love and heart-felt forgiveness are far more Christ-like than calling it quits.

Although God hates divorce, He loves the divorcee and will help all who call upon Him. He wants to teach us how to love the way He loves.

Faith2Live Actions

- Admit that divorce is not honoring to God and violates His plan for us.
- Believe that God can, through the power of Jesus Christ, enable you to bring healing to your marriage.
- Make a decision to only consider divorce as a last option and only under biblical grounds.
- Seek counsel from a pastor or church leadership prior to deciding to divorce.
- Humbly ask God for His forgiveness if you have divorced for non-biblical reasons and commit to remaining unmarried.
- If you are hurting from the pain of divorce, seek support from another believer and your small group.
- Trust God and make your current marriage a priority.

Celebrate Recovery is Chapelwood's Christ-centered approach to breaking the power of hurts, habits and hang-ups. Celebrate Recovery meets at 7pm every Monday at Chapelwood.

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"God's View On Divorce/Remarriage" 2010
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