

When GOD got a DIVORCE



God obtained a divorce. He separated from the wife He loved and sent her away. God gave Israel a certificate of divorce and sent her on her way because she committed adultery.

I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. (Jeremiah 3:8a)

God commands that we be holy as He is holy.¹ For God knows how to love, knows the meaning of love, and has the power to love.²

So God provides an example for all those who divorce. Though this separation broke God’s heart and grieved Him bitterly, He did not remarry. God never sought to fill the void in His heart by finding another bride. In short, God remained faithful even when the other partner did not. Even though separated, God remained devoted to His bride and waited for her to return. He labored, waited, and worked for her reconciliation. Such is the nature of selfless love. This

same selfless love lies behind God’s command that if a man and woman divorce, they must remain unmarried or be reconciled. The following command of the Lord allows no exceptions, excuses, or justifications.

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): 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)

Our understanding of the other scriptures on this subject must hinge on these clear words. No other scripture will contradict 1 Corinthians.

Adultery

If you divorce, you have to remain unmarried. Otherwise, you commit the sin of adultery. If a man divorces his wife and she marries another man she commits adultery.

He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” (Mark 10:11-12)

The only way a husband cannot be held responsible for causing his wife to commit adultery is if she already committed adultery while in the marriage. Likewise, the only way a wife cannot be held responsible for her husband not committing adultery is if he already committed adultery before the divorce.

But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5:32)

Most people assume that this verse gives them a license to divorce and remarry if the other person commits adultery, rather than understanding Jesus’ real point. Many a marriage has been slowly destroyed by one partner simply waiting for the other to commit adultery, in order to justify remarriage. But Jesus did not refer to remarriage at all. He



only discussed the person responsible for causing the other spouse to commit adultery. In our sinful flesh we assume that Jesus gave us a “loophole” to allow a person to remarry. As we have already seen, Jesus said a person must remain committed until their partner dies.

Every man or woman who remarries commits sexual immorality, a sin for which the penalty is hell. It doesn’t matter if you divorced and remarried before you became a Christian. Adultery is always adultery, whether in Christ or not. For example, someone who murdered before coming to Christ is not then free to murder once they become a new creation in Jesus. Indeed, the new creation in Jesus is able to live the words of Jesus and thus remain unmarried. The new creation is able to call sin for what it is, in this case the sin of adultery.

All who divorce and remarry, and do not repent of such sin, will burn with liars, magic artists, cowards, unbelievers, murders, and idolaters. A second marriage means a second death.

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the *sexually immoral*, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death. (Revelation 21:8 emphasis added)

Certificate of Divorce

Men complicate the divorce and remarriage question because they do not want to hear what Jesus had to say. In our sin we do not want to accept it, so we seek to talk our way around it. Like a spoiled teenager that pretends not to understand what you tell him, we too shut our ears to the Lord.³ In the next scripture, Jesus tells us that God only permitted divorce and remarriage under Moses because the people’s hearts were hard.

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)

Jesus said that, in the “beginning,” God made man in such a way that he must remain committed to one person.

In other words, God only allowed Moses to grant divorce and remarriage because the people would not have even bothered to follow God at all if they couldn’t divorce. The Israelites only concerned themselves with their own comfort, joy, and selfish happiness. As a pastor, many times have I heard men say, “I am going to marry her so that her children will have a father.” What a noble lie. They really only care about their own personal pleasures and use the children to obtain the woman. After all, he doesn’t have to marry the woman to fulfill that role. He could be a father to

the children without marrying her. In fact, the church should so overflow with Holy Spirit⁴ inspired love, that the thought of such a marriage should not even occur. No woman in a church should feel the need for a husband because the love being poured out in the church should cause her to push past fleshly desires for love.⁵

When the disciples realized what Jesus said about marriage they couldn’t help but declare, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”⁶ But Jesus spoke emphatically, just as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:10. Christians, who know the power of grace, must accept it. If you cannot accept this, then do not call yourself a Christian and do not claim the blessings of heaven. The world, of course, cannot accept these words and refuses to conform to God’s demands. Therefore they will burn in hell.

husband is not “bound” to try and make the marriage work. Not being bound does not abolish the marriage as though it never existed. That would be foolish. For example, if a man is not bound and the marriage void, are his children void also? Of course not. That man would still consider them to be his children. In the same way, whether living under the same roof or not, his wife remains his wife until she dies. The term “bound” here means that a person is not obligated to try and make the situation work in the home. As we have already seen, it does not mean that they are free to remarry. That would contradict everything else Jesus said. As Jesus said, “If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”⁸ Think of the misery that occurs in a home where the unbeliever, or false Christian, constantly demands their partner to compromise their relationship with Jesus. God has called us to be at peace with all men.⁹ But one can never compromise their relationship with Jesus. When peace is not allowed to reign in a marriage, then God permits divorce.

However, as we have already seen, even in such circumstances, a person must remain unmarried or be reconciled to their partner. This one fact, if preached by the church today, would save a lot of marriages and a lot of believers’ relationships with the Lord. For, if you remove the hope of remarriage in a potential divorce situation, the motivation to make a marriage work goes way up. God is love and requires that we also have a love that hopes all things.¹⁰ Anyone divorced must always love their partner and hope that they might repent. They must be like God, and love even when receiving no love in return.

How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?
(1 Corinthians 7:16)

Willful Sin

If you are a Christian and you remarry after reading this tract then you place your salvation in jeopardy. You cannot, now, willfully sin by marrying

someone else and expect God to forgive you. For to remarry now would be to deliberately sin against the blood of Jesus—a matter that would separate you from the mercy of God.¹¹

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. (Hebrews 10:26-27)

You have received the knowledge of this truth and, even if you try to write this off as just an “opinion,” then you willfully sin against Jesus. So many divorced and remarried pastors, elders, and teachers fill the church because they have committed spiritual adultery against the Lord. They are enemies of God and will be consumed with raging fire and a fearful judgment too terrible to contemplate. So strong a point is this with God that John the Baptist lost his head over the issue of divorce and remarriage.¹² If the church desires revival and purity, then we must renounce divorce and remarriage in no uncertain terms. For you can be sure of this,¹³ that the person who “deliberately” ignores this and disobeys will find “no sacrifice” for this crime against God.

Forgiveness

Is there forgiveness if a person has been divorced and remarried? For those who have not deliberately sinned, yes. However, the path to forgiveness is a narrow road and not one that many couples or churches want to walk. For if God allows a divorced and remarried couple to remain together (and He may not) they must take every opportunity to warn others against committing the same sin. See our website for the story of one such couple.

Above all, don’t pray about your situation by yourselves. You no doubt deceived yourself before, and probably even believed that God called you to marry after your divorce. You must seek out those who know and have lived the offensive message of the cross.¹⁴ You must find people who will show you no

favoritism,¹⁵ but can hear from God what will glorify His name.

As Joel declares, “Even now,” after all the misery you have created and the mess you have made, if you return to God with all your heart, He will forgive. And, instead of judging you, mercy and blessing will be found. But this can be no outward token of tears. It must be a repentance deep within your heart and life. You will need to find a church that knows the power of being crucified with Christ, and how to teach honest repentance.

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.
(Joel 2:12-14)

Great joy and forgiveness await you if you repent. God is indeed full of love and compassion. Indeed, He will relent from the calamity and work good. We can testify to you that we have seen God work good in all kinds of situations. Will you not come, confess your sin, and seek the Lord as to how He would work His goodness?

Endnotes

¹ 1 Peter 1:16
² 1 John 4:16
³ John 8:43-44
⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:9
⁵ 1 Timothy 5:11-12, Note also that there is no mention of a divorced woman, only widows.
⁶ Matthew 19:10
⁷ We do not want to strain on a gnat and swallow a camel. We must understand that the scripture is calling for peace in the family.
⁸ Mark 3:25
⁹ Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14
¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:7
¹¹ Hebrews 6:6
¹² Luke 3:19
¹³ Ephesians 5:5
¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:18
¹⁵ 1 Timothy 5:21

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