

# Why Is Divorce And Remarriage Still An Issue?

**Introduction.** Issues rise and fall among Christians. Some never seem to go away. One of those issues is divorce and remarriage. Why does this issue persist among churches and brethren? Is it so hopelessly complicated that we cannot possibly know the truth? No, the opposite is actually true. Divorce and remarriage is one of the simplest doctrines in the New Testament. Here is what we know:

1. Malachi 2:16 – God hates divorce. Therefore, it should not be practiced among believers.
2. Matthew 19:6 – Marriage is permanent. Divorce is not an option.
3. Matthew 19:8 – “... but from the beginning it was not so.” Divorce is not God's design or plan.
4. Matthew 19:9 – The only cause for divorce that God allows is the cause of fornication.
5. Matthew 19:9 – When one divorces his mate for any other cause and marries again, he commits adultery.
6. Matthew 5:31-32 – When a man divorces his wife for a cause other than fornication he causes her to commit adultery when she marries again. And the one who marries her commits adultery.
7. 1 Corinthians 7:10 – When people violate God's law concerning divorce, their only option is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to their mate.
8. Romans 7:1-3 – God's marriage law binds a man and a woman together for life. When one's mate dies, he or she is free to remarry.
9. Matthew 14:3-4 – John said of Herod's marriage to his brother Philip's wife: “It is not lawful for thee to have her.” In cases of this kind, where a marriage is unlawful, adultery exists, and the unlawful marriage must be ended.

Since God's laws concerning divorce and remarriage are so clear, why is there so much confusion? There are at least four good reasons that we will examine.

## ***I. Because Permanence In Marriage Is No Longer Taught***

- A. The home is where lifelong patterns and habits are established. Children learn from parental instruction and example how they should live.
  1. Sons want to be like their fathers and daughters want to be like their mothers.
  2. Parents naturally teach their children their own convictions, and the children come to embrace these truths as the pattern for their own lives (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; cp. Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7-8).
- B. Two issues contribute to the problem of divorce and remarriage.
  1. God's law of permanence in marriage and that He hates divorce are not taught with the same force and urgency as they once were.
  2. This vacuum is filled by the commonplace nature of divorce today. Children see it everywhere around them, and even Christian parents now talk about divorce as if it is the most normal marital outcome in the world.

- C. Simply put, the issue persists because some people want to change mates as casually as they change the carpet in their house, and they want to force the Bible to sanction them.

## **II. *Because Husbands And Wives Do Not Know How To Treat Each Other***

- A. The Bible gives wonderful guidelines to help husbands and wives know how to treat each other (Ephesians 5:22, 29). Going deeper, there are specific actions, particularly in public, to avoid:
  1. Stop criticizing your spouse to others — being critical of your spouse hurts their reputation. It damages the respect others have for you too. And it conveys that your marriage is not a safe place for your spouse to be.
  2. Stop making your spouse the punch line — this belittles your spouse and suggests that you do not care, even if you do. At some point, your spouse and others have to wonder if the jokes are really jokes.
  3. Stop sharing the details of your love life — I have heard other men talk very negatively about their sexual relationship, and lack thereof, with their wife. When they do so, they are really breaching trust with their wife. Intimacy is built on trust. When you expose your private love life in your marriage, especially in a derogatory fashion, to public scrutiny, you can easily destroy that trust with your spouse.
  4. Stop treating your spouse like a child — I have also heard men and women in public instructing and ordering their spouse around like a child. It is humiliating to your spouse.
  5. Stop checking out people who are not your spouse — you may have heard someone say, “I can look at the menu as long as I do not order.” That is wrong. Your wandering eyes and careless words may cause your spouse to feel insecure and inadequate. It is degrading to your spouse as well.
  6. Stop constantly correcting and contradicting your spouse — when your spouse is telling a story, stop interrupting to inject missing parts or correct mistakes. It demeans them. Instead look for opportunities to honor your spouse and help them save face in public. Be their hero.
  7. Stop flaunting your body to others — this applies to men and women. Our culture does not value modesty, and when you flaunt your features, it appears you are advertising yourself or are available to others. Dress like you are only available to one person — your spouse. Because that is the only person you should be available to.
- B. Simply put, the issue persists because some people refuse to respect their spouse appropriately. Such behavior chips away at the beautiful relationship God has created for mutual love and respect.

## **III. *Because People Are Governed By Emotions More Than By Divine Law***

- A. Every sin among men is the result of people rejecting the laws of God.
  1. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), and God’s laws for divorce and remarriage simply do not matter to most people in modern society.
  2. The so-called “gay marriage” issue is proof of this fact. God and Christ said that marriage is between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5).

- B. Every false position concerning divorce and remarriage that I know of begins the same way — with an emotional, “What are you going to do about poor old \_\_\_\_\_?”
1. Whenever someone starts out a discussion of divorce and remarriage with this line, you know that they are willing to toss away the truth for emotional and faulty reasoning.
  2. False positions exist because men and women who do not obey God get themselves in heartbreaking situations, and then emotional parents, elders, and preachers try to find some way to repair the damage without calling on adulterers to repent.
- C. There can be no doubt that many marital messes are terrible, and that someone is getting mistreated.
1. A wife is left to spend her life without a husband at home and a husband is left to manage a home and raise children without a wife because of divorce. Children have to grow up in a divided or completely broken home.
  2. When two people have no scriptural right to be married, they are in adultery and must separate to save themselves from the consequences of sin (Colossians 3:5-7; cp. Ezra 10:17-19, 44). This can put an enormous burden on a home.
- D. Malachi described divorce and remarriage contrary to God’s laws as “dealing treacherously” with one’s “companion” and “wife by covenant” (Malachi 2:14-15). Malachi added that God hates divorce “for it covers one’s garment with violence” (v. 16).
1. However, that people suffer hardship, pain, and grief because of God’s laws does not mean that God’s laws are to blame.
  2. The blame falls on the shoulders of those who reject the Bible and marry and divorce contrary to it.
- E. Simply put, the issue persists because some people want everyone to have the right to find happiness in marriage. They view any restriction in the matter of divorce and remarriage to be fundamentally unfair. They are willing to twist the scriptures to give practically anyone the right to marry, even multiple times.

#### ***IV. Because People Think They Cannot Be Happy Without Being Married***

- A. Here is what people really mean: “I cannot be happy if I have to live alone. I must get married, and I will find a loophole in the Bible to allow it.”
1. God designed marriage, set its boundaries, and declared it to be what a man and a woman should do (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 7:9).
  2. Any of us can sympathize with one who is in the unfortunate position of not being able to scripturally marry.
  3. But it is possible to live a spiritual, contented life and go to Heaven when you die without ever being married (1 Corinthians 7:7; cp. Philippians 3:7-8; 2 Timothy 4:8).
- B. Jesus’ disciples commented on how seemingly impossible it would be to follow God’s marriage laws, and said it was better that they not marry (Matthew 19:10).
1. One who has no right to marry must determine not to marry in violation of God’s law. Disobedience will keep you out of Heaven (Matthew 7:21).

2. As we saw in the introduction, Paul clearly taught that there are some people who cannot scripturally marry (1 Corinthians 7:10; Romans 7:1-2).
- C. Simply put, the issue persists because some people subscribe to the notion that “the heart wants what the heart wants” and their heart should never be denied. They try to twist the scriptures to support this view. Choose carefully, for nothing is worse than a bad relationship.

**Conclusion.** Marriage is a glorious institution, but it is not everything. The issue of divorce and remarriage persists because when people are involved in unscriptural marriages, they want to free themselves and be married again.

Since just before the end of the New Testament era, the writers warned of people who would compromise truth (2 Peter 1:1-3, 19; Jude 12), and people need only to patiently search, and they will find someone who will justify their adulterous marriage. This is not the way of Christ, and we need to do everything we can to help people live up to the holy ideals of God’s righteous standard.

I am deeply indebted to David Weaks for the use of his material.