

Overview:

Divorce is not part of God's ideal plan for our world. Marriage was designed to be a life-long commitment between one man and one woman. In practice, divorce is a part of our fallen world and God has provided direction to guide us in proper conduct.

Outline:

I. Sanctity of marriage

- a. Established by God (Gen. 2:24)
- b. Representative of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32, Rev. 19:7; 21:9)
- c. A solemn covenant (Mal. 2:14)
- d. To be honored by all (Heb. 13:4)

II. Reasons to stay married

- a. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16)
- b. Honor God's bond (Mal. 2:15a, Matt. 19:4-6, Mk. 10:5-9)
- c. Honor vows (Mal 2:14, Num. 30:2, Deut. 23:21-23)
- d. Impact on children (Mal. 2:15:a)
- e. Emotional trauma (Mal. 2:16)
- f. It is commanded for most situations
 - i. Do not break faith (Mal. 2:15b; 2:16)
 - ii. Let man not separate (Matt. 19:6, Mk. 10:9)
 - iii. Must not separate (1 Cor. 7:10-11)
 - iv. Must not divorce (1 Cor. 7:10-11)
 - v. Bound to husband (Rom. 7:2)
- g. Avoidance of immorality (1 Cor. 7:1-5; 7:9)

III. When is separation/divorce permitted?

- a. Unbelieving spouse leaves (1 Cor. 7:15-16)
- b. Adultery (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:9)
 - i. Forgiveness is often the better option.
 - ii. Not a lifetime permit
- c. Be careful about making assumption about either of these situations

IV. When is remarriage permitted?

- a. When divorce is permitted, remarriage is assumed and allowed
 - i. Example of Jewish divorce decree
 1. "Thus I do release thee and send thee away and put thee aside that thou mayest have permission and control over thyself to go to be married to any man that thou mayest desire." (VerStratten)
 - ii. Jesus acknowledged (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:9)
 - iii. The "unmarried" (1 Cor. 7:8-9; 7:27-28)
 - iv. Two bonds must be broken: legal and spiritual (as allowed by Scripture)
- b. Death of a spouse (Romans 7:2-3)
- c. Unbelieving spouse leaves (1 Cor. 7:11)
- d. Adultery
 - i. Jesus' statements (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:9)
 - ii. In O.T. the adulterer would be stoned (and remarriage would be allowed) (Lev. 7:10)
- e. Not permitted for believing spouses who divorce (without adultery) (1 Cor. 7:11)
- f. Remarriage forbidden to a former spouse after they've remarried (Deut. 24:1-4, Jer. 3:1-10)

V. Difficult situations

- a. Divorce is not permitted just because marriage is hard.
 - i. Unjust suffering is commendable (1 Peter 2:19-20; 3:1; 3:7)
 - ii. To this you were called (1 Peter 2:21; 3:1; 3:7)
 - iii. Divorce is not for "any and every reason." (Matt. 19:3)
 - iv. Marriage can be very difficult!
 - a. Unloved woman (Prov. 30:23)
 - b. "If this is the situation..." (Matt. 19:10)
- b. What is "adultery"?
 - a. *Porneía* = Illicit sexual intercourse (Matt. 5:32; 19:9)
- c. Desertion (by a fellow believer)
- d. Abuse
 - a. Does not always justify divorce (1 Peter 2:13-21; 3:1; 3:7)
 - b. "...but if she does..." (1 Cor. 7:11)

VI. Scriptural difficulties

- a. Jesus' teachings on remarriage
 - i. 2 messages
 1. Sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:27-32)
 2. Answering Pharisees in Judea (Matt. 19:9, Mark 10:11, Luke 16:18)
 - ii. Not every account includes every detail.

The Mark version cannot be used to contradict the Matthew version, but merely to corroborate the parts that are in agreement.
 - iii. The whole of scripture must be considered.
- b. Is divorce only allowed during betrothal period?
 - i. Example of Joseph and Mary (Matt. 1:19)
 - ii. Based on the idea that *Porneía* as used in Matt. 5:32 is referring to fornication, not adultery. However, the word has a broader meaning than adultery, not narrower.
 - iii. Consider context and dispute between Hillel (any reason) and Shammai (adultery).
- c. Are elders/pastors disqualified by divorce?
 - i. "Husband of but one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2; 3:12, Titus 1:6)
 - ii. A person divorced and remarried legitimately only has "one wife"
 - iii. "One-wife kind of a man" (Wuest)
 - iv. When divorce and remarriage is permitted, then it would be inconsistent to disqualify a leader based upon it.
 - v. Adultery may disqualify as it reflects on a leader's character.
 1. "Shame will never be wiped away." (Prov. 6:33)

Supporting Material:

Verses:

Miscellaneous Old Testament

Genesis 2:23,24 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house,² and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man...

Malachi: God Hates Divorce; Broken Faith; Godly Offspring

Malachi 2:13-16 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

Divorce in the Gospels

Matt 5:31-33 "It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'³² 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.³³ Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.'"

Matt 19:3-12 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?"⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ 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'?"⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."⁷ "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital

unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."¹⁰ The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."¹¹ Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.¹² For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Mark 10:2-12 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied.⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."⁵ "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.⁶ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'⁷ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,⁸ and the two will become one flesh.⁹ So they are no longer two, but one.⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.¹¹ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Luke 16:18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

1 Corinthians 7 Instructions

1 Cor. 7:8-20 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.⁹ But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.¹⁰ To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.¹¹ But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.¹² To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.¹³ 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.¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?¹⁷ Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to

him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

¹⁸ Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.²⁰ Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him.

1 Cor. 7:25-31 Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.²⁶ Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are.²⁷ Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife.²⁸ But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.²⁹ What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none;³⁰ those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep;³¹ those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

Death Releases from Law of Marriage

Romans 7:2-3 ... by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage.³ So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

Peter's Instructions on Right Living

1 Peter 2:18-21 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.¹⁹ For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

1 Peter 3:1-2 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.