

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, & REMARRIAGE

4 VIEWS:

1. Marriage is an indelible sacrament; there can be no divorce or remarriage (Roman Catholic view).
2. Marriage creates a new unbreakable family union and relationship, divorce is possible on 2 grounds (sexual immorality or desertion of one spouse), but there is no divine permission for remarriage, (early church view, classical Anglican view, John Piper)
3. Marriage is a dissoluble covenant, divorce & remarriage are permitted on 2 grounds – adultery, desertion (some Pharisees in Jesus’ day, classical Protestant position).
4. Marriage should be faithful, but divorce & remarriage on serious grounds – adultery, desertion, physical and emotional abuse (some Pharisees in Jesus’ day, some evangelicals today & liberal view).

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS ON MATTHEW 19:1-12:

In v 3, why do the Pharisees ask Jesus about divorce?

What does Jesus say about God’s standard and will of marriage in vs 4-6 and how are these verses an answer to the Pharisees question about divorce? (See Genesis 1:26-27; 2:20-25; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:10-16; Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16).

In vs 7-8 why does the Law of Moses “permit” divorce? What is the relevance of “hardness of hearts” for Christians (see Hebrews 3:12-13; 8:10).

Read Matthew 1:18-20; 15:19. What does “sexual immorality” mean in 19:9?

In v 10, why are the apostles so shocked by Jesus’ command?

Given the standard for marriage & the apostles’ shock, does v 9b really give permission for remarriage?

AREAS WHICH WE CAN ALL AGREE ON:

1. Marriage is “the voluntary sexual and public union of one man and one woman which creates a new family and union. This union is patterned on the union of God with His people, His bride; of Christ and His church. Essential to marriage is God’s calling to lifelong exclusive sexual faithfulness.” It is a creation ordinance for all peoples everywhere at all times.
1. Christians should only marry Christians (1 Corinthians 7:39). Christians married to non-Christians should make their marriages work (1 Corinthians 7:12-13)

2. Sex before marriage, adultery, homosexual sex, sexual impurity of all sorts, many types of divorces, and unlawful marriages are all sinful and must be repented of (1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20; Romans 1:26-32).
3. In circumstances of the unrepentant sexual immorality and/or desertion of one spouse, the innocent spouse (after all attempts at reconciliation and forgiveness have failed), should not think themselves guilty if a divorce happens.
4. On one view, perhaps, it may be permissible for the innocent partners of a marriage which has ended in divorce, may think about remarriage, if there has been a good period of time for healing and counselling. Those in second marriages must seek to make their new marriages work.
5. Pastoral compassion and love should be offered to all those with struggling marriages. Speak to Stephen, Ro, or Francis if you have problems. We are very happy to help.
6. Church discipline must be exercised in all matters of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1-12; Matthew 18:15-19).
7. Divorce and remarriage are not unforgivable sins. Christ does forgive and give grace (Ephesians 2:1-10).

JOHN PIPER'S VIEW:

In the New Testament the question about remarriage after divorce is not determined by:

1. The guilt or innocence of either spouse,
2. Nor by whether either spouse is a believer or not,
3. Nor by whether the divorce happened before or after either spouse's conversion,
4. Nor by the ease or difficulty of living as a single parent for the rest of life on earth,
5. Nor by whether there is adultery or desertion involved,
6. Nor by the on-going reality of the hardness of the human heart,
7. Nor by the cultural permissiveness of the surrounding society.

Rather it is determined by the fact that:

1. Marriage is a "one-flesh" relationship of divine establishment and extraordinary significance in the eyes of God (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:8),
2. Only God, not man, can end this one-flesh relationship (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9—this is why remarriage is called adultery by Jesus: he assumes that the first marriage is still binding, Matthew 5:32; Luke 16:18; Mark 10:11),
3. God ends the one-flesh relationship of marriage only through the death of one of the spouses (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39),
4. The grace and power of God are promised and sufficient to enable a trusting, divorced Christian to be single all this earthly life if necessary (Matthew 19:10-12,26; 1 Corinthians 10:13),

5. Temporal frustrations and disadvantages are much to be preferred over the disobedience of remarriage, and will yield deep and lasting joy both in this life and the life to come (Matthew 5:29-30).

Those who are already remarried:

1. Should acknowledge that the choice to remarry and the act of entering a second marriage was sin, and confess it as such and seek forgiveness
2. Should not attempt to return to the first partner after entering a second union. The prohibition of a wife returning to her first husband even after her second husband dies (because it is an abomination) suggests very strongly that today no second marriage should be broken up in order to restore a first one (Deut 24:4).
3. Should not separate and live as single people thinking that this would result in less sin because all their sexual relations are acts of adultery. The Bible does not give prescriptions for this particular case, but it does treat second marriages as having significant standing in God's eyes. That is, there were promises made and there has been a union formed. It should not have been formed, but it was. It is not to be taken lightly. Promises are to be kept, and the union is to be sanctified to God. While not the ideal state, staying in a second marriage is God's will for a couple and their ongoing relations should not be looked on as adulterous.

By John Piper. © Desiring God. Website: desiringgod.org