

DIVORCE

1. How has society trivialised marriage and divorce? Why?
2. What is it that makes divorce seem easy?
3. Is it right that believers can divorce? In what conditions?
4. What factors contribute to divorce?



Marital breakdown is always a tragedy.

It contradicts God's will, frustrates his purpose, brings to husband and wife pains of alienation, disillusion, guilt and flows down into the children bewilderment, insecurity and often anger.

God hates divorce. Mal 2:16

THE FALL

The 3 needs of Marriage	Effects on Marriage (Before the FALL)	THE FALL	Consequences (After the FALL)
1. Be Fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28)	Family Sustenance Healing Growing Self-realisation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pains in childbirth • Dealing with waywardness of children • Dysfunctional families
2. It is not good for a man to be alone (Gen. 2:18)	Mutual Support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle for control and dominance • Dealing with the sorrows of a broken world
3. Become one-flesh (Gen. 2:24)	Sexual union		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with sexual immorality • Emphasis of sex for pleasure rather than reproduction

OT BACKGROUND

Deut 24:1-4

- The passage does not recommend or encourage divorce.
- It's objective is to forbid a man to remarry his former spouse, if he has divorced her, since this would be 'detestable in the eyes of the Lord'. It was to protect the women for an unpredictable and perhaps cruel former husband.
- The grounds of divorce if a husband finds something shameful or indecent in his wife. This does not include adultery as this is punishable by death. So what is this? There was two interpretations
 1. a sexual offence of some kind, just short of adultery
 2. something displeasing to her husband, trivial issues, bad cooking, quarrelsome etc. Something embarrassing to her husband
- Note that the verse does suggest that remarriage was acceptable

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST

Matt. 19:3-12

- The Lord's teaching was given as a response to a question by the Pharisees to test him in this debate.
- Jesus had already laid a new standard for divorce in the sermon on the mount Mat. 5:31-32 referring to the Deut 24 passage. Note that it says 'it has been said', Jesus was not opposing scripture but tradition, perverse interpretation of the religious teachers. Deut passage doe not say you must provide a certificate, but says 'if' you divorce and give a certificate.

What did Jesus Christ teach?

1. **Jesus confirmed the permanent nature of marriage**
 - He took them back to creation
 - That human sexuality was a divine creation and human marriage a divine ordinance.
 - He made God the author of both.
 - He focused on 2 texts Gen 1:27, 2:24

- He then added his own explanation. 'they are no longer two but one', 'what God has joined together (yoked), let man not separate'.

This is clear cut...marriage is more than a human contract: it is a divine yoke.

The basis of marriage is not 'fluctuating human experience ('I love you , I love you not') but the divine will and word (they 'become one flesh'). It is something that God does in our loves, we have no right to break it!

2. Jesus called remarriage after divorce 'adultery'

- Reaffirmed Matt. 5:31-32.
- If a man divorces and remarries (for a reason which is not acceptable V9) he is committing adultery Matt. 19:9
- If a women divorces and remarries (for a reason which is not acceptable V9) she is committing adultery Mark 10:12
- Anyone who marries a divorced person commits adultery Luke 16:18

3. Jesus permitted Divorce and marriage on the sole ground of immorality

Both Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 contain an exception 'clause'. 'I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another women commits adultery.'

- a. 'sexual immorality' → Greek 'porneia' sexual infidelity or 'marital unfaithfulness' and included 'every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse' (affairs, homosexuality, bestiality etc.)
- b. The reason that Jesus made it the only grounds for divorce is because it violates the 'one-flesh' principle which his foundational to marriage.
- c. Divorce for immorality is permissible, not mandatory. Jesus did not teach that the innocent party must divorce an unfaithful partner or even encourage or recommend it. Instead he focused on the permanent nature of marriage.
- d. About remarriage after divorce V10 may suggest that one should not marry after divorce from the astonishing response form the disciples. But one cannot commit adultery after divorce unless they remarry. Some believe that marriage 'one-flesh' is only broken by death. See 1 Cor. 7:11 and Rom. 7:1-3

WHAT DID THE APOSTLE PAUL TEACH?

1 Corinthians 7:10-16

1. Note that V10 'not I, but the lord' and V12 'I, not the Lord' does not suggest two different authorities, one Godly and other human. Instead Paul is saying that Jesus taught (V10) when present, and I teach V12 in this letter. Both have divine authority.
2. Paul confirms Jesus' teaching in V10-11 from Matt 19
3. Note that in Rom. 7:1-3 Paul teaches that it is permissible for anyone to remarry after their spouse dies. As long as they are a believer. 1 Cor. 7:39.
4. Paul permits divorce due to an unbelieving spouse. This is a case when two unbelievers marry and then one is converted. Some questions came from the Corinthian church
5. If the unbelieving partner 'is willing to live with' the believing partner, then the believer should not divorce. Because the unbeliever is sanctified (privilege, connection and relationship; towards holiness/being set apart) by the believer.
6. if the unbeliever is not willing to live with the believer then it is best to separate. We are called to live in peace and there is no guarantee that the believer can win over the unbeliever.
 - a. The issue here is about the unbeliever's unwillingness to remain and not converting. This is not saying that just because some is converted that the marriage is now void.
 - b. It is about the believer and unbeliever being together for the unbeliever's sake. i.e. sanctification

SUMMARY

Malachi 2:14-16

1. God created humans male and female and He instituted marriage. His intentions are that human sexuality will find fulfilment in marriage and that marriage will be an exclusive, loving and lifelong union.
2. Divorce is nowhere commanded, and never even encouraged, in scripture.
3. Divorce and remarriage are permissible (not mandatory) only on two grounds
 - a. An innocent person may divorce if the partner commits sexual immorality
 - b. If an unbelieving partner refuses to live with a believer

If we accept any other forms of divorce it is suggesting that God's ideal in Gen. is an illusion and that God has made a mistake. But like the story of salvation, reconciliation is the key, where God can take the broken and restore it to his ideal. He can take a broken marriage and make it new again, only if the partners are willing!