



Divorce and Remarriage

Any statement on divorce and remarriage risks two things: 1) Saying something is permissible when God says it is sinful, or, 2) saying something is sinful when God says it is permissible. It is out of a deep respect for God's Word, and humility, therefore, that we make these statements. No statement on divorce and remarriage, including this one, can substitute for intense scrutiny and the most careful evaluation process including a dedication to prayer and the counsel of church elders. People in difficult marriages often tend to shortcut the process and lose God's priorities. Instead of asking how they can preserve their marriage they focus on trying to find legitimate biblical grounds for divorce. Divorce is not God's way of resolving marriage problems, instead, the scriptures say God "permits it" in limited circumstances "because of hard hearts," (Matt 19:8).

1. Marriage is a sanctified God-ordained institution intended as an exclusive, lifelong relationship between a man and a woman (Gen 2:24; Prov 5:15-19; Eccles 5:4-6).
2. It is God's desire that problems in marriage be resolved and that marriages not be dissolved (Matt 19:4-6). When a marriage ends before death, it means a husband and/or wife have chosen less than God's best.
3. God hates divorce (Mal 2:16) just as he hates other sins (Prov 6:16-19). Divorce means sin has hardened at least one person's heart (Matt 19:8) and broken a relationship which God wanted to preserve.
4. The Bible specifies two circumstances where remarriage after divorce *is permitted*:
 - a. Where one's spouse violates the "one flesh" relationship (1 Cor 6:15-20) of the marriage through *porneia* (a New Testament Greek word meaning *promiscuity, infidelity, or perversion*). See examples in Matt 5:21-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; 1 Cor 5:1; Jude 7.
 - b. Where an unbelieving spouse has deserted the marriage and there is no prospect of reconciliation (1 Cor 7:10-15).
5. The Bible speaks somewhat indirectly about another circumstance where remarriage after a divorce *may be permitted* – when a divorce and/or remarriage occurred prior to salvation (2 Cor 5:17).

It's important to remember God loves divorcees as much as he loves anyone. Unbiblical divorce is not the unpardonable sin. Those who have been unbiblically divorced can repent of their sin, make appropriate restitution (Mt 18:15-17; Acts 26:20), and receive forgiveness in Christ (1 Jn 1:9) and full restoration to church fellowship and service (Gal 6:1-2).