

What Does the Bible Say About Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage?

Pastor Hammond

People who have been divorced and remarried are always welcomed at Long Hill Baptist Church! We praise God that believers who are guilty of the sin of fornication or adultery may know that these sins are covered by the blood of Christ (1 John 5:13). Nonetheless, we are clearly called to avoid these sins!

God has designed marriage:

- Genesis 2:21-25 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man **leave** his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** unto his wife: and they shall be **one flesh**. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The LORD does not permit believers to court or marry unbelievers:

- **2 Corinthians 6:14** ¹⁴ ¶ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
- **Deuteronomy 7:3-4** ³ Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. ⁴ For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

The LORD does not desire divorce:

- **Matthew 19:4-6** ⁴ And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read (GEN 2:24), that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? ⁶ Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. **What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**

The LORD hates adultery; He never permits adultery:

- **Exodus 20:14** Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- **Leviticus 20:10** And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

According to the Bible, a divorced person, who remarries, necessarily commits adultery:

- **Mark 10:11-12** ¹¹ And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.
- **Luke 16:18** ¹⁸ ¶ Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

The Bible also says that fornication (intimate behavior among unmarried persons) is not acceptable to God:

- 1 Corinthians 6:18 ¹⁸ **Flee fornication.** Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3 **For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:**

The Bible says that we should not live in a situation which appears to sinful:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

While believers who have been divorced may be used greatly of the LORD in service to Him, the Bible does not permit divorced men to serve as pastors or deacons:

- 1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife
- 1 Timothy 3:12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife

What does 1 Corinthians chapter 7 teach about marriage, divorce and remarriage?

- **Advice to the unmarried:** Its permissible for a believer to remain unmarried (v1, 8-9).
- **Advice to married believers:** V.10 Let not the wife depart. If she departs (v11), "let her remain unmarried" "or be reconciled" (to her husband). The passage also commands "let not the husband put away (divorce) his wife."
- **Advice to believers married to unbelievers**
 - If an unsaved wife desires to remain married, the believing husband should remain married (v.12)
 - If an unsaved husband desires to remain married to a saved wife, she should remain married (v.13)
 - If the UNBELIEVER DEPARTS, LET HIM DEPART (v15)
 - However, remarriage is not permitted:
 - According to v. 29, the wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives.

The “fornication clause” of Matthew 5:32 does not permit remarriage due to the infidelity of one’s spouse

It is often argued that the so-called “fornication clause” of Matthew 5:32 permits divorce in the event that a spouse has been unfaithful. However, the parallel passages in Mark and Luke do not contain the fornication exception. Rather, they simply state that a man who puts away (i.e. divorces) his wife and then re-marries another is guilty of adultery. So, why does Matthew include the fornication exception while Mark and Luke do not?

A proper interpretation of Matthew 5:32 require an understanding that Matthew addressed a Jewish audience that had a custom of a “betrothal period.” It appears that when Matthew writes of “fornication,” he is referring to infidelity that occurs during that Jewish betrothal period (Matthew 1:19). Recall that when Joseph wrongly believed that Mary had been unfaithful, he “was minded to put her away,” i.e. to break their betrothal (they were not yet married). This was permitted under the law.

Unlike Matthew, both Mark and Luke wrote primarily to a gentile (non-Jewish) audience that had no betrothal custom. As such, there was no need to advise their audiences that divorce was permitted during betrothal. Rather, Mark and Luke simply proclaim that believers who divorce and re-marry necessarily commit adultery.

Matthew	Mark	Luke
Jewish Audience	Gentile Audience	Gentile Audience
<p>Permits “put(ting) away” for fornication</p> <p>Matthew 1:19 ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, <u>was minded to put her away privily.</u></p> <p>Matthew 5:32 ³² But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, <u>saving for the cause of fornication,</u> causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.</p> <p>Matthew 19:9 ⁹ And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.</p>	<p>“Whosoever” put away and marry = adultery</p> <p>Mark 10:11-12 ¹¹ And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.</p> <p>Mark 10:19 ¹⁹ Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.</p>	<p>“Whosoever” put away and marry = adultery</p> <p>Luke 16:18 ¹⁸ ¶ Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.</p> <p>Luke 18:20 ²⁰ Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.</p>

Praise God that believers who are guilty of the sin of fornication or adultery may know that all of our sins are covered by the precious blood of Christ! Nonetheless, let us avoid these great sins!