

God's Word on Divorce and Remarriage
(A Divorce and Remarriage Statement)

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This General "No Divorce" Statement was
Adopted by the Berean Bible Church in 1990.

This is a statement on the beliefs and practices of the Berean Bible Church on the subject of divorce and remarriage. Since this can become a divisive issue within the church it is fitting to make some definitive statements on this subject, which we believe to be supported by Scripture.

Those who are practicing members or want to become members are advised to read these brief statements and the churches practice regarding divorce and remarriage. They will be asked to sign a paper of agreement when becoming members regarding this issue.

We view divorce as a sin that God hates based upon the clear ethical and unchanging statements of Scripture.

Malachi 2:16

"For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away (divorce): for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

Matthew 19:8

"He (*Jesus*) saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

The point of Jesus is clear. If divorce is pursued it is evidence of hardness of heart. Such a hardened condition need not be found in the heart of a child of God for his stony heart has been changed to a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). God's grace is available and sufficient through the greatest trial or problem imaginable (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The Genesis account ("**from the beginning**") gives us God's view on the permanency of marriage.

In Genesis 2:24 God declares:

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

This is God’s original and final word on marriage! It is to be a permanent relationship. Jesus taught the permanency of marriage as well.

Matthew 19:8

“He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but **from the beginning it was not so.**”

God’s *perfect* will is for marriage to be permanent and God’s *permissive* will for divorce and remarriage is seen when He regulated a problem that was already occurring. Moses tried to legislate the problems associated with divorce and remarriage in his day since the people were going to divorce and remarry despite what God had previously said about the permanency of marriage. Through Moses God regulated divorce (Deut. 24) and through Paul He regulated slavery (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-4:1). But neither Jesus or Paul approves of these actions.

This Deuteronomy passage was NOT designed for practice in the local Church setting to create so-called *grounds* for divorce and *loopholes* for remarriage. The granting of a certificate of divorce was established as a *legal* basis for divorce and remarriage under the Mosaic Law, which would in many cases stop the excessive legalization of adultery and also protect a spouse from an unjust sentence of death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22), due to only an alleged case of adultery. There was a test for this accusation (Numb. 5:11-31).

It must be remembered that neither Moses nor Jesus **CONDONED** the actual divorce and remarriage of people. It was a sin that defiled the people (“after that she is defiled” - Deut. 24:4). Moses was creating a process of legislation for disobedient and hard-hearted people who wanted to divorce and remarry (Mark 10:4-5) and therefore disobey God’s original design. In no way was Moses condoning divorce as God’s prescribed will and purpose for the people. The act of remarriage, should it occur after divorce, must be seen as something that is detestable in the Lord’s eyes which would result in the land being overcome by sin (“thou shalt not cause the land to sin” – Deut. 24:4; “shall not that land be greatly polluted” - Jer. 3:1).

Divorce and remarriage was recognized by the *people* of Israel, but it did not have the approval of the *God* of Israel. In short, Moses was not APPROVING of divorce and remarriage but was REGULATING the problems related to divorce and remarriage for REBELLIOUS and HARD-HEARTED people (“Moses because of the hardness of your heart ... suffered it to be so” - Matt. 19:8). If you want to divorce and remarry against God’s original law, it becomes a matter of disobedience and callousness to God’s original purpose and design for marriage.

Many foolishly conclude that Moses himself was also divorced when there is not one scrap of Biblical evidence to support such a claim. Either the Ethiopian woman was Moses’ first wife or his first wife (Zipporah - Ex. 2:15-22) died and he later married the Ethiopian woman (Num. 12:1). Out of jealousy, the brother and sister reacted negatively to the marriage (Num. 12:2). In short, Moses was not divorced, as Israel’s spiritual leader, nor was he approving of divorce and remarriage in Deuteronomy 24. Moses was trying to legislate divorce – not give license for divorce. Although God permitted polygamy and divorce in the Old Testament, He never approved of it.

In a similar way, God was NOT putting His stamp of approval on divorce when mentioning His divorce with Israel (Jer. 3:8) in relation to the Mosaic regulations (Jer. 3:1; Deut. 24:1-4) which only allowed divorce because of the hardness of people’s hearts (Mark 10:5). Jeremiah was simply using divorce imagery in a metaphorical sense to teach how God’s relationship with Israel was corrupted due to her apostasy (spiritual unfaithfulness). God had not actually dissolved His relationship with Israel (Jer. 3:14) which was based on the Abrahamic Covenant promise (Gen. 12:2-3; 15:7-21; 17:7; Rom. 11:1-2).

Nevertheless, some conclude by God’s statement to Israel that “adultery” is a Scriptural ground for divorce. However, under the Mosaic Law adultery was punishable by death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24). Perhaps God was declaring to His wife (Israel) the picture of a severed relationship, where He privately puts her away (Matt. 1:19). Even in wrath God remembers mercy! The point is this, we should not read more into Old Testament illustrations than God intends to teach. If we do, God would be guilty of polygamy since He was portrayed as the husband of both the northern and southern kingdom of Judah (Jer. 3:8-18).

In a similar way, if we press the illustration too far God would also be guilty of breaking His own original and moral design for marriage (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:8). A good rule to follow is not to use parables and illustrations for doctrinal teaching. Many times one general lesson is being taught and not doctrinal conclusions.

Many also foolishly conclude, “Since God got a divorce, I can get a divorce.” Does God’s statement regarding His divorce of Israel teach that adultery is grounds for divorce? NO! To use this statement as a proof text that God was approving of divorce in the case of adultery ignores the clear doctrinal revelation of the epistles regarding the permanency of marriage (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39). We must distinguish between the *historical* and *teaching* passages of the Bible. Some passages are designed to teach *spiritual lessons* but not present *doctrinal teaching* regarding a specific subject, such as divorce. In short, God may use an illustration to teach a spiritual lesson without *condoning* the particular practice or action within the illustration (Matt. 13:24-25). Therefore, one should not build a theology for divorce on metaphorical illustrations.

In addition, God was NOT endorsing divorce because of the command given in Ezra’s day (Ezra 10:1-4). The divorce permitted in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah was a unique situation that took place in the restoration community under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah to ensure the continued existence of the nation (Deut. 7:3-4), their faith, and preserve the line through which the Messiah would come. This was a *special protective action* that would ensure the purity of the nation’s bloodline and the entrance of the Messiah or Savior into the world. The destruction of a recently restored nation by heathen marriages with idolatrous Gentiles would threaten the whole program of salvation (John 3:16).

It must be remembered that divorce is not being condoned or promoted as God’s choice for any marriage but was once again being *regulated* in light of unusual circumstances. To use Ezra 10:1-4 as grounds for divorce today is to bypass the clear commands of Scripture on this subject (1 Cor. 7:39) and misapply abnormal and unusual regulations for divorce in Ezra’s and Nehemiah’s day to today’s society. Bible history reveals that God would sometimes take drastic measures to preserve His people and the coming seed (Christ).

In summary, Moses (Deut. 24:1-4) *tolerated* divorce because of the “hardness of hearts” of the Israelites, but God’s preference and plan for marriage was that

there be no divorce (Gen. 1:27; 2:24; Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19:8). During Ezra's day permission was given for divorce because of Satan's plan to corrupt the birth of the Messiah through intermarriage. None of these regulatory texts on divorce are given to govern the life of the church today and should never be practiced as any "grounds for divorce" in assembly life today.

We view divorce and remarriage as committing adultery.

Romans 7:2-3

"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law (*the law of marriage which God gave in Genesis*) to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband (*the law of the permanency of marriage – "the two shall be one flesh"*). So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress (*because according to the law of marriage she is still bound to her former husband through the covenant of marriage*): but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law (*free from the binding covenant of the law of marriage*); so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man (*a man who is not divorced himself – 1 Cor. 7:39*)."

J. Carl. Laney observes:

"While Romans 7:1-6 is primarily concerned with the believer's release from the law, Paul's illustration from the marriage union shed light on his view that marriage is permanent until death. Only death can break the marriage bond and release a spouse to marry another partner."

Mark 10:11 -12

"And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife (divorce his wife), and marry another, committeth adultery against her (he commits adultery against his former wife because according to God's moral code the man is still has a binding covenant with his wife even though he is divorced from her). And if a woman shall put away (divorce) her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (she commits adultery against her former husband because she is still bound to him by the previous marriage covenant).

Luke 16:18

"Whosoever putteth away his wife (divorces his wife), and marrieth another, committeth adultery (because according to God the previous marriage union is

still intact with his previous wife): **and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery**” (commits adultery with another man’s wife due to her previous marriage covenant with another man).

Jesus adds an exception clause in Matthew 5:32:

“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife (from a legal perspective), **saving** (except) **for the cause of fornication** (an illegitimate non-binding marital relationship not recognized by God), **causeth her to commit adultery** (when and if she remarries another man following the divorce): **and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery**” (a man also commits adultery if he has been previously divorced and remarries because of his marriage contract with his former wife).

In Matthew 19:9 the exception clause is seen again:

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife (divorces his wife from a legal perspective), **except it be for fornication** (a legal termination of an illegitimate marriage not recognized by God), **and shall marry another, committeth adultery:** (through remarriage adultery occurs because in God’s eyes the previous marriage covenant with the man’s former wife still exists) **and whoso marrieth her which is put away** (divorced) **doth commit adultery**” (because the previous marriage covenant of the wife still exists with her former husband).

This is the law and theology of marriage. God reveals His plan **and moral law** for marriage in Genesis 2:24 and repeats it in the Gospel records and epistles. It is one wife for life or one man for life. No divorce. No exceptions. There is no Biblical ground for divorce. Both the church epistles and Jesus Himself taught that a person commits adultery when they divorce and remarry but also causes others to commit adultery in the process who have had previous wives or husbands (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18).

In Matthew 5:31 (“It hath been said”) Jesus was reflecting on Deuteronomy 24 and the Mosaic regulation of divorce; therefore, the assumption is that divorced people (both women and men) will remarry. It is from this perspective that Jesus speaks concerning divorce and remarriage. According to Christ’s teaching, mere legal divorce does not dissolve marriage, and remarriage constitutes adultery. Divorce clearly does NOT dissolve the marriage, otherwise Jesus would not have taught that remarriage results in adultery. This is reason enough not to divorce

and remarry. *In God's eyes the covenant and bond of marriage holds precedence over a person until the death of a spouse* (Rom. 7:2-3). God does not acknowledge divorce; therefore, any remarriage to a divorced person while their spouse is still living constitutes adultery and is a grievous sin in God's eyes.

The Ten Commandments (God's unchanging moral law) command that we should never commit adultery ("Thou shalt not commit adultery" – Exodus 20:14; Matt. 5:27). God's moral laws never change!

Remarriage to a divorced person is unholy and forbidden in God's eyes.

"They (*the Old Testament priests*) shall not take a wife *that is* a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband (*divorced*): for he is holy unto his God. Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the Lord, which sanctify you, *am* holy" (Lev. 21:7-8). As New Testament priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9), we should abide by this same ethical standard for our lives. We should never marry a divorced person, causing that person to commit adultery and ourselves to commit sexual immorality with the person.

We are bound to our present marriage partner until death.

Romans 7:2-3

"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law (the law of marriage which God gave in Genesis) **to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband** (the law of the permanency of marriage – "the two shall be one flesh" – Gen. 2:24). **So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress** (because according to the law of marriage she is still bound to her former husband through the covenant of marriage): **but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law** (free from the binding covenant of the law of marriage); **so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man** (a man who is not divorced himself – 1 Cor. 7:39)."

This means that if we divorce, we should remain unmarried until our partner dies. This is because it's only death that releases us from the marriage bond and covenant. It does not matter if we are the "innocent party" or not. This is God's immutable law. Spiritually speaking, when a believer dies to their old law relationship, they are ready and free to marry the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 7:4).

Physically speaking, the same is true regarding earthly marriage. Only when the old relationship has been severed by death can there be remarriage to another.

We do NOT believe the “exception clause” is condoning a legitimate divorce and remarriage in God’s eyes. The “so-called” exception clause for marriage does not give grounds for divorce and remarriage (Matt. 5:32; 19:8). The term “**fornication**” (porneia) that Jesus used was not the normal word for “adultery” (moicheuo); therefore, it’s improper to read adultery into the exception clause.

James Montgomery Boice remarked:

“It cannot refer to adultery because adultery was punishable by death, and in that case there would be no need for a divorce.”

This is a significant point considering the Jewish audience Matthew was addressing. Also, whenever this term is used in a generic way (referring to sexual immorality), it does not specifically refer to adultery (1 Cor. 6:13; 2 Cor. 12:21). It’s also interesting that Matthew seems to make a distinction between the two words of fornication and adultery (Matt. 5:32; 15:19), as do other lists in Scripture (Gal. 5:19; Mat. 15:19; Mark 7:22; 1 Cor. 6:9; Heb.13:4). Lexical and Biblical evidence does not require the meaning of adultery in the divorce texts unless it can be proven (which it cannot) that the word always means adultery. Everything points to the exception clause as being something *uncommon*, certainly nothing as common as adultery.

It’s also interesting that the intended Roman readers of Mark’s Gospel (Mark 10:11-12) and the Greek-Gentiles readers of Luke’s Gospel (Luke 16:18) would not have known about this exception clause that was recorded only in Matthew’s Gospel and which was primarily for Jewish readers. Therefore, Jesus must make a clear affirmation of the permanency of marriage in all the Gospel records. Matthew’s record does not *overturn* Mark’s and Luke’s record on divorce. The pressing crime of many evangelicals today is that they miss the main teaching of Jesus, even in Matthew’s record to the Jews, which teaches the permanency of the marriage relationship (no divorce). Surely Jesus would not undo this binding covenant of marriage with an exception clause in Matthew’s Gospel record, which no others might read, and invalidate His clear claims recorded by Mark and Luke.

The Jewish setting of Matthew's gospel account uses the term "**fornication**" (porneia) in a *specialized sense* as in other instances (1 Cor. 5:1; Acts 15:20, 29) which the Jews would fully understand. Matthew was writing to a Jewish audience that would be very familiar with what this word "fornication" (porneia) was referencing. Historically during Jesus' day this referred to incest, committing sexual immorality with near kin or relatives (Leviticus 18:6-18; 20:21). Near kin marriages was a hot issue in Jesus' day and among the Jews. Therefore, the Pharisees were obviously trying to put Jesus to the test and see if He would defend the Old Testament Scriptures about near kin marriages (fornication - porneia) and use these Scriptures to speak out against Herod's illegal incestuous marriage with his niece, the former wife of his brother Philip (Matt. 14:3-4).

Let's state it in simple fashion. God puts all marriages together (Matt. 19:6) *except* when two people commit incest (marriage among near kin or relatives). In this unique case, a marriage was never established in God's eyes and an exception could be made, where the two could sever their marriage from a *legal* standpoint and no longer live together in incest. According to Christ, He did not consider these as legitimate marriages much like homosexual marriages today.

Divorced and remarried couples are forgiven in God's site of all their sins and justified in His presence just like any other believing Christian.

Ephesians 1:7

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Romans 3:24

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The teaching that divorced and remarried couples cannot be forgiven of their previous sin of adultery through remarriage is not Biblical. Nor does the Bible teach that believers in Christ can lose their salvation because of divorce (John 3:16; 6:47). God's grace provides forgiveness for all sins. We are not accepted before God on the basis of any legal system (Titus 3:5). However, if you already are divorced and legally remarried, you must understand something. Although the sins of adultery of believers are legally and eternally forgiven before God their previous marriage bonds and covenants are still intact before God's eyes (1 Cor.

7:39). *Our sins are forgotten by God (Micah 7:19) but not our previous marriage covenant.* This is why remarriage constitutes adultery with another marriage partner (Matt. 19:9). The good news is that the believer always possesses a positional and eternal state of forgiveness before God's throne in Heaven (Col. 1:14) and in a practical manner can have their personal walk and fellowship with God restored here on earth and no longer be considered an adulterer or adulteress (1 John 1:9).

Jesus did NOT teach that remarriage to a divorced person results in an inescapable situation of adultery.

Despite what some conclude, Jesus never taught that a divorced and remarried Christian would live in a perpetual state of adultery. Jesus taught that the divorcee and person who remarries commits adultery in the act of remarriage and sexual relations, but a believer in Christ already possesses an unchanging position of forgiveness before God that never changes (Eph. 1:7; 1 John 2:2, 12). So, their sin of adultery has already been paid for by Christ's death (Gal. 3:10) and according to God's legal records they are no longer considered to be adulterers and adulteresses.

God does not hold a person's sin of adultery against them when they are divorced and remarried. A person's sins are legally and positionally *forgiven* based upon Christ's death but within the Christian life God's people must also confess their sins to restore their fellowship and communion with God (1 John 1:9). All of this means that a divorced and remarried person does not live in a continual state of adultery; however, the marriage covenant is not *forgotten* by God (1 Cor. 7:39). We can walk away from a vow, but we cannot walk away from God who holds us accountable for what we have promised (Ps. 15:4). Therefore, to remarry constitutes an act of adultery that needs to be forgiven and cleansed within the Christian life.

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It's certain that allowing divorce and remarriage to occur because of the people's hardened hearts does not mean God was sanctioning living in continuous adultery

(Deut. 24:1-5). God apparently unites divorced and remarried Christian couples in a new union while at the same time maintaining their legal forgiveness and righteous standing before God's throne (Rom. 4:6-7). In other words, they would no longer be seen as an adulterer or adulteress before God.

The divorce that Moses permitted in Deuteronomy 24 does not sever the original marriage relationship since in remarriage the person was defiled ("after that she is defiled" – Deut. 24:4). There is a carry-over of the previous marriage bond into the new marriage which results in an act of adultery (Matt. 5:32). However, God permitted the woman to marry again and by His forgiving grace and own legislative law her second marriage was not considered to be a continuous act of ongoing adultery. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4 the remarried couple is identified as "husband" and "wife" in the new relationship – not adulterers.

Many debate whether or not a new marriage covenant can be established before the death of a divorced spouse. It's clear that a new covenant can be created. Jesus recognized that the woman of Samaria had five husbands and she was presently living with a man not her husband (John 4:16–18). Apparently all five of those marriages had been legalized through the government which God had established on earth (Rom. 13:1) and Jesus apparently recognized she had five different marriage covenants.

But how can multiple marriages be recognized, and a person still commit adultery in a new relationship? It's because God on His own terms and in His own way still honors the first marriage covenant, since defilement occurs when remarriage and sexual relations occur after a divorce (Deut. 24:4, Matt. 19:9). However, it's equally true that He also establishes a new covenant in remarriage with another partner. However, the good news that the unsaved couple can find forgiving grace through a *saving* relationship (Acts 16:31) with Jesus Christ and those who are already Christians who have been divorced and remarried can experience a *restored* relationship with the Lord (1 John 1:9).

So both are true. Adultery occurs in remarriage for the existing covenant and "one flesh" union still exists with the previous partner. On the other hand, God allows a new union to form in remarriage and through His forgiving grace the sin of adultery is permanently dropped. It is certain that a believer in Christ can enter a new legal marriage and continue to possess legal forgiveness and justification

before God (Rom. 5:1-2) but at the same time each child of God needs to confess their sin to God (1 John 1:9) to maintain fellowship with the Lord.

It was previously recognized and legislated under Jewish Law that one could not divorce another marriage partner (in their second marriage) and return to their original marriage partner and commit adultery once again, since this practice was termed as a sinful act or “abomination before the Lord” (Deuteronomy 24:4). Why would it be an abomination? It’s because another marriage covenant and bond was evidently still existing in God’s eyes even through permission was given to human agency and authority in recognizing the new marriage. (Rom. 13:1) The same would be true today when divorce and remarriage occurs. Marriage is by contract or covenant through the legally stated authority that God has ordained. But in remarrying the act of adultery is committed and in need of forgiveness.

In summary, the act of adultery does occur in remarriage (Matt. 5:32) because of an outstanding covenant or bond with a previous partner but this sin can be forgiven in a new marriage covenant and union that is established, overriding the previous union. Unsaved people can be forgiven and no longer termed an adulterer (1 Cor. 6:9-11) and believers can be restored to God’s fellowship (Psalm 51:10). God by His own grace can forgive the adulterous sin and reestablish another marriage covenant that replaces the previous one, which results in the couple not living in a perpetual state of adultery.

The Bible does not advise that a divorced and remarried person should divorce their present marriage partner and seek to return to their previous partner.

Should a person legally dissolve a marriage if they come to realize they have entered a marriage wrongfully? Should they break up their present marriage? We can answer this question in this way. Should sexual intercourse between married partners cease? Not according to Paul (1 Cor.7:5). Should marriage end in divorce? Not according to Jesus (Mark 10:9; Matt. 19:6). Did God instruct that a new marriage should be dissolved? Not according to Moses’ regulations on divorce (Duet. 24:1-4).

Moses’ regulations forbid divorcing a new marriage partner and returning to the original partner. God never advised breaking up another marriage since this causes further sin and complication in the act of divorcing and remarrying (“thou shalt not cause the land to sin” - Deut. 24:4). This practice of returning to a

previous marriage partner after another marriage has been legally dissolved would only complicate the adultery factor and in one sense legalize the sin. God has never instructed anyone to divorce to resolve the adultery issue with their present partner. Forgiveness is what is necessary to resolve this matter; not breaking another marriage covenant and reentering another one. Therefore, a person must abide in their present marital status (1 Cor. 7:20) and remain faithful in the present marriage.

This means the divorced and remarried Christian must confess the sin of adultery (1 John 1:9), appropriate God's forgiveness, and not end the present marriage. Christian gets a second chance at marriage in spite of entering the marriage wrongfully. Grace means that a divorced and remarried couple need not break up. Although entering the marriage wrongly, they should remain in that marital state in which they find themselves (1 Cor. 7:17-24). There are some things you can't undo without doing more harm. Breaking up a marriage is one of them.

Divorced and remarried couples are not looked down upon in our assembly life. They are welcome to become members and warmly received into our loving fellowship.

1 John 4:7

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

Colossians 2:2

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love ..."

We are all sinners saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). Everyone has sinful baggage from their past and we are called upon to love one another in the local church setting and body of Christ as blood-washed brothers and sisters in the Lord. We must all put the past behind us (Phil. 3:13) and serve the Lord together (Rom. 12:11). This assembly encourages friendships and fellowship among the saints (Acts 2:42), but at the same time this local church does not encourage dating friendships between someone who is divorced and another who may not be divorced, or between two divorced people. The reason is because of the "appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22) that such a relationship might generate and the testimony of the local assembly. A couple could very easily be tempted to remarry resulting in adultery.

Those who desire to become members will be required to understand the nature of their sin of adultery in divorce and remarriage and repent of this sin if necessary (Rev. 3:3, 19). They should share with the elders their desire to remain faithful in their present marriage.

It should be the desire of every Christian to keep their present marriage pure and intact for the rest of their lives (Titus 2:4-5). They should live above reproach and therefore provide a good testimony for their own children and the future generation of believers. The strongest deterrent to divorce is positive instruction concerning God's plan for the permanence of marriage. I'm convinced that if a Biblical view on divorce and remarriage were taught in the local churches, there would be fewer divorces among believers.

The divorced couple should readily receive and be open to any preaching against divorce and remarriage (2 Tim. 4:2) knowing the sin, heartache, and difficulties it has brought into their own lives and understand the deliverance and help this teaching can give to other couples.

The divorced couple should be open to hearing all the Word of God preached (2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:27) which includes those passages that deal with the permanency of marriage and the importance of faithfulness in the marriage relationship. This means they should welcome sound teaching on marriage which includes the teaching of "no divorce and remarriage."

Because of the nature of the sin of adultery in remarriage God has established a holy standard for those who lead the church and present God's Word in the local church setting.

In our local congregation some limitations are placed upon those who have been divorced and remarried. The primary limitation has to do with authority in the local church setting or leading roles. The primary leading roles have to do with elders, deacons, and teaching the Word of God. The deacons are to meet the qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3, 8, 10. The deacons, like the pastor, are required to have a proper marital status ("the husband of one wife"). We interpret this to mean that a man in authority is to be devoted to his wife which would out of necessity also include the fact that he was never divorced. God holds this requirement for service in the leadership role. We reject

the views that concludes this is a statement on polygamy or that it is only dealing with faithfulness in the present marriage.

All Sunday School teachers who handle the Word of God in Berean Bible Church shall also be required to have a similar marital status as the deacons. This means they should not be divorced or remarried. We maintain this high standard because God places this requirement upon the pastor, who handled the Word of God in the early church. Since there was no apparent Sunday School during the apostolic days, we apply this same Biblical guideline for those who handle the Word of God. We take this approach in honor and respect of God's holy Word.

We must remember that the *sin* of adultery is forgivable (Luke 7:48) but the *consequence* of the sin goes on.

Proverbs 6:32-33

“But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”

There are certain built-in consequences of adultery that are not removed even after we repent (Gal. 6:8). There are still emotional wounds, dishonor, and reproach (disgrace) in divorce. The violation of God's marriage standard is a public sin that has certain consequences attached to it, some of which limit the believer's service in local church ministry regarding leadership positions of authority (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). A drunkard lives with the consequences of his sin (cirrhosis of the liver) and so does a divorced person. However, we can thank the Lord that we don't have to be overcome by our past but excel spiritually in our present-day living for Christ (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:13-14).

Some Additional Questions Answered

➤ **Is there a time when divorce is permissible?**

The answer is NO. However, even after a *divorce* occurs one should, if possible, seek reconciliation and the reinstatement of a legal and peaceful marriage. In addition, there is a time when *separation* is necessary with the goal and intent of eventual reconciliation and restoring peace to the relationship. Also, sometimes

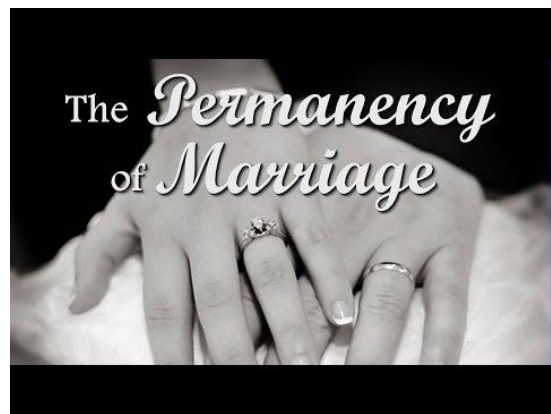
separation is necessary in order to maintain the peaceful sanity and wellbeing of a person. Paul talks about all of these things in 1 Corinthians 7:10-20.

According to both Paul's and Christ's teachings (Mark 10:1–12), believers should not divorce. If separation does occur, the believer must either *remain unmarried permanently* or *be reconciled permanently*. These are not a counselor's suggestions; they are the Lord's commands.

a. Christian marriages

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord (something that Jesus had already taught), **Let not the wife depart** (in the context of marriage a technical term for divorce) **from her husband: But and if she depart** (be divorced from him), **let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife** (divorce his wife).



Paul taught was Jesus taught on divorce and remarriage (“yet not I, but the Lord”). Appealing to and reaffirming the teaching of Christ (Mark 10:9-12; Luke 16:18), Paul declares in no uncertain terms that married persons should not seek divorce. There are “no exception” to divorce. The possibility of remarriage is taught nowhere. It’s not a viable option since Jesus says to remarry would constitute adultery (Luke 16:18). We must dispel the divorce myth in the church today. Two times he affirms the principle of no divorce (“Let not the wife depart from her husband” and “let not the husband put away his wife” vv. 10-11). If divorce or separation does occur that person should remain single for the rest of his life to be reconciled and restored (“let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled”).

Four times in these verses Paul argues for “no divorce.” Count them!

- ✓ “Let not the wife depart from her husband” – vs. 10
- ✓ “let not the husband put away his wife”- vs. 11
- ✓ “let him not put her away” – vs. 13
- ✓ “let her not leave him” – vs. 13

Later in the same chapter Paul concludes:

- ✓ Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed" – vs. 27
- ✓ "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth" - vs. 39

We see in these verses once again how God's intent is not for divorce to occur in the marriage relationship but reconciliation. God clearly says that the wife is to "remain unmarried." There is no implication for a remarriage to a different partner in the case of adultery or willful desertion. She is not to remarry, and the man is not to divorce his wife. The Bible is very clear on this. Paul sums up this argument in 1 Corinthians 7:39 when he says, "The wife is bound by the law (of marriage) as long as he husband liveth." God wants marriage partners to be "reconciled" (1 Cor. 7:11) if possible, instead of passing through a divorce.

b. Mixed marriages (believers and unbelievers)

1 Corinthians 7:12-13

"But to the rest (*those who are in a mixed marriage with an unbeliever*) **speak I, not the Lord** (*unlike vv. 10-11 where Paul shares what Christ taught on divorce. Paul is now giving additional information on this subject of marriage that Christ did not share*): **If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away** (*no divorce*). **And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him** (*no divorce*)."

When Paul says that he was speaking and not the Lord, it does not mean that he was presenting his own viewpoints and not speaking by inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16). He is simply explaining that what he is about to say had not been previously taught by the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth. In other words, there is no instruction in the Gospels on this matter. The "rest" means those who have partners which are not believers and are involved with a mixed marriage. This passage does *not* condone a Christian marrying an unsaved person (2 Cor. 6:14-17). It probably has in view the situation where one of the partners was saved after marriage. Once again, divorce is NOT seen in any positive light. It's always frowned upon by God and should be avoided. Paul now states the reason why divorce should be avoided at all cost.

The reasons for reconciling and preserving the marriage are now stated:

1 Corinthians 7:14 declares:

“For (the reason to strive for peace in the present marriage) the unbelieving husband is sanctified (set apart) by the wife (the believing wife), and the unbelieving wife is sanctified (set apart) by the husband (the believing husband): else were your children unclean; but now are they holy (they are potentially set apart for God’s movement and blessing to occur in their hearts and lives because of the presence of the saved partner in the marriage).”

The presence of a believer in a non-Christian home has a sanctifying influence. It sets it apart or sanctifies it by giving it a Christian influence in the home. To sanctify means to set apart. In this context, it means that the unbelieving spouse and children are set apart in the sense of being placed in a position of external privilege where they can be influenced by the saved husband or wife. This can possibly result in their own salvation and transformation.

The unbeliever and children in the marriage relationship can be positively affected by the godly living or spiritual influence of the saved partner, so that the unsaved spouse might eventually become a Christian (1 Cor. 7:16). In other words, the unsaved partner does receive spiritual benefits or advantages when one partner has become a Christian. The unsaved husband or wife and entire family has in some sense become “sanctified” or set apart for a special work of conviction by the Holy Spirit through the testimony and the changed behavior of the Christian partner. This means that both the unsaved partner and children are set apart in the sense that they possess a place of special privilege to be influenced by the believer. This means that children should have at least one parent who loves the Lord who will tell them the Gospel story and guide them in the truth.

1 Peter 3:1 is a case in point:

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won (to salvation in Christ) by the conversation (changed behavior) of the wives.”

The salvation of the unsaved partner and children is more likely if the one member of the family who is saved remains in the home and does not pass through a divorce.

1 Corinthians 7:15

“But if the unbelieving depart (*seeking a divorce*), **let him depart** (*go through with the divorce*). **A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases:** (*the bondage or slavery to allow the unsaved partner to adversely affect their Christian life and therefore keep the marriage intact*) **but** (*in contrast to divorce*) **God** (*God’s true desire*) **hath called us to peace”** (*to experience a peaceful relationship with the present marriage partner and maintain the marriage as previously stated in vv. 10-14*).

The believing partner is under no obligation to maintain the marital union if the unsaved member initiates the separation or divorce. There comes a time when one cannot stop what another person intends to do. The words “not under bondage” are interpreted by some to mean that the deserted Christian partner is now free to remarry (they are no longer bound to the covenant of their previous marriage). However, this is not the case. Paul does not contradict himself (1 Cor. 7:10, 11, 13, 39).

In the context God condemned divorce in the marriage relationship arguing for reconciliation (1 Cor. 7:10-14). The same is true in this instance (1 Cor. 7:16). God is not giving the right for a person to remarry after divorce has occurred. In what sense is the person not under bondage? In the sense that they must not follow the sinful promptings of the unsaved person to keep the marriage together and therefore be bound (enslaved) to the sinful lifestyle of an unsaved partner in the marriage. A Christian must not become a slave to the whimsical actions and lifestyle of the unbeliever to maintain the marriage. A believer should not maintain the marriage with an unsaved person at any cost. A line must be drawn in the sand. It’s not “peace” at any price (Acts 5:29). In other words, the Christian is not obligated to prevent the divorce, but this does not give him or her freedom for remarriage.

Grosheide explains it like this:

“If the believing party were under obligation to prevent the departure he would be subject to the unbeliever and would virtually be forced to abandon his or her faith since only by doing that could a divorce be prevented.”

Paul shifts back the argument to the main theme at the end of 1 Corinthians 7:15 when he states that “God hath called us to peace.” In other words, in opposition to divorce, it’s always God’s desire and goal to experience “peace” while maintaining the present marriage relationship where He has called and saved us and seek for reconciliation at a later point in time (1 Cor. 7:16). A peaceful relationship should always be the goal of a marriage – not divorce. As Christians, we are not “bound” to keep the marriage intact when sin and compromise is involved, but neither are we told to divorce our spouse. Instead, we are to always seek reconciliation and “peace” in the present marriage and maintain the relationship on this basis.

Romans 12:18

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

This includes our marriage partner. Living in peace within the marriage relationship is important. When peace is not possible due to mental and physical marital trauma, then action must be taken for separation but not divorce. Paul would have not objected to a couple separating for a time if the believer was in physical danger from the unbeliever, since he already gave permission for Christians to separate temporarily for some spiritual purpose (1 Cor. 7:5). The reason for the separation is because God wants “peace” to exist in human relationships. In fact, it is better to have a peaceful relationship with an unbelieving spouse who has departed than to try and hold the marriage together, while being overcome by the sin and abuse of the unbeliever.

What Paul did not want was for believers to initiate the termination of their marriages (“for if the unbeliever depart” – vs. 15). Why no divorce? It’s because your partner may become saved!

1 Corinthians 7:16

“For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?”

Looking back to verse 14 (the sanctification and salvation of the unsaved spouse), the goal should always be to promote peace in the present marriage (verse 15), instead of discord by our godly living and example with the prospect of the unbeliever’s salvation.

It should be noted that Paul would never give the prospect of the unbelieving partner's salvation occurring if a believer was free to remarry or no longer be bound to their partner as so many suggest in 1 Corinthians 7:15. In other words, don't divorce, since through a lifestyle change of godly living and the witness of the Gospel the unbelieving spouse or partner might become saved! Therefore, one should NOT promote divorce in the marriage relationship and if divorce does occur, one should strive for reconciliation with the marriage partner if a peaceful agreement can be made and maintained between the partners.

We should always strive for a peaceful solution in our marriage relationship and reconciliation, *but never as a Christian should we file for divorce*. Paul's point was that a Christian should strive to preserve the union and to keep the peace, but with the understanding that marriage is a mutual relationship - not a unilateral relationship.

Once again, the believing partner should always strive for a peaceful marriage solution and recognize that God can use the union as a means to "save" the unbelieving member (1 Cor. 7:16). However, the marriage should not be maintained solely as a basis for evangelism when there is mental and physical trauma occurring in the relationship. To hold desperately to the marriage even though the unsaved partner wants to end it is not wise.

A final word on the permanency of marriage is now given.

1 Corinthians 7:17 declares:

"But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches (*even the Berean Bible Church*). Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised."

This means that when we become saved (a Christian) through faith in Christ we should seek to maintain the marriage relationship. We are to remain in the position and place God has called or saved us and make the best of things, striving to please the Lord in the marriage and seek the salvation of our unsaved marriage partner.

1 Corinthians 7:20

“Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.”

In other words, don't attempt to get out of a marriage relationship with an unsaved person (a mixed marriage) but remain in the marriage if possible, seeking the salvation of the marriage partner. Your life can have a saving and eternal impact on the life of the unbeliever since you have become a Christian. Godliness, patience, and evangelism (by life and lips) may bring salvation into the life of the unsaved person.

➤ **What about the innocent party?**

According to Jesus, this makes no difference. Usually there is not a 100% innocent party. It normally takes two to tangle! Also, what did the so-called innocent party do to help prevent the divorce? Did they love their mate unconditionally and sacrificially (Eph. 5:24)? Did they seek help and counsel? While one partner may have contributed to the difficulties, it is hard to designate one person completely innocent. In any event, if a person is not primarily at fault (has not committed adultery, taken drugs, etc.), the person still does not have any God-given right to remarry. Although there are some who do not want a divorce and who have not cheated on their spouse, or necessarily done something to necessarily promote the divorce, God still views a person who has been divorced and remarried as being “defiled” (Deuteronomy 24:4) from a *moral* perspective but not from a *salvation* perspective (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

➤ **Does it matter if the divorce occurs before or after one was saved?**

In short, it makes no difference. God recognizes marriage between unsaved people (John 4:18) with the resulting sin of adultery occurring in remarriage. Jesus gave His teaching on divorce and remarriage to unbelieving Pharisees (Matt. 19:3; Mark 10:2). Apparently God's view regarding “no divorce and remarriage” is His standard for society, not just for converted church members!

People also ask, “Must we remain married to unsaved partners? Doesn't our conversion alter things?” The answer of Paul to these questions is that it does not change things (1 Cor. 7:10-20). You must remain married to the same partner and if the marriage is broken it's equally true that you are committing adultery when you form another covenant. Marital relationships do not change just because

someone is converted. *Salvation does not alter the marriage state.* The marriage is still a covenant and union before God and breaking it and starting another one, even if one is saved, would also be violating that union and covenant.

According to God's requirement for pastors and deacons, divorced men who were now converted and who desired to become a pastor or deacon should be refused because of their dissolved marriage. They were to be men who were never divorced (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6 – "husband of one wife"). This is God's mind on the matter of divorce. He regards marriage so sacred that a conversion experience makes no difference in the sight of God. Divorce and or remarriage disqualifies them from holding office not only because of the breach of a marriage covenant but because of the sacredness of the office of elder or deacon. People who make this "pre-conversion prerequisite" as grounds for remarriage and holding office in the church do so without any Scriptural basis.

In short, there were no "before" or "after" salvation prerequisites on divorce and remarriage which are outlined for those wanting leadership positions and the same should be true for every obedient Christian. Simply stated, God said they were to be the "husband of one wife" (a one-wife man) which means they were never to have been divorced. Their conversion to Christ does not enter into the picture for this is how solemn and important the marriage covenant is to God.

➤ **What if a divorced person's spouse dies? Is a divorced person free to remarry when their spouse dies?**

In other words, is a person still bound to the divorce consequences (no remarriage) even though their spouse has died? Is the divorced person "free" to remarry, as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 7:39, if the other person has died? Does "death" open the door for remarriage to another person? The answer seems to be in the affirmative. God would no longer hold a person responsible and bound to their previous marriage covenant if their spouse dies. The covenant is broken at this point and the divorced person would be free to remarry without committing adultery.

- **If a member in the church has a close relationship (dating or friendship relationship) with a divorced person, while their original husband or wife is still living, what should be the response of the church toward him and her?**

There is an old saying which goes like this: “*Every date is a potential mate.*” When dating a divorced person this needs to be remembered. Therefore, the pastor and church will not openly encourage this type of relationship between two people who might be *members* of the local assembly because of what it might lead to (remarriage and adultery among church membership). When remarriage and adultery does occur, then it leavens the testimony of the local assembly and its membership. The passage of 1 Corinthians 5:1 mentions the testimony aspect: “It is reported ... among you.” The church should not seek to encourage any relationships that might lead a person into sin and certainly never endorse remarriage to a divorced person.

The personal testimony of a believer should remain above reproach at all times which includes abstaining “from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22) by not placing himself in predicaments which might question his integrity before God. 1 Timothy 4:12 reminds us to be “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” This is why dating a divorced person, whose spouse is still living, is not a good testimony among those who are church membership and involved in assembly life.

As a church member, think of what kind of message you might be sending to others when dating a divorced man or woman and what your personal testimony should be as a Christian seeking to live above reproach at all times. Philippians 1:27 reminds us, “Only let your conversation (*entire manner of living*) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ (*that which is appropriate of a Gospel believer who is walking in holiness*). Christians should have a testimony that cannot be questioned in relation to their personal relationships and decisions.

One cannot cover all the situations and scenarios in a study like this. However, as a general rule those who are *nonmembers* will not be granted membership while they are in this type of questionable, dating relationship, since this kind of relationship can lead to remarriage and adultery. Those who are non-divorced *members* who develop a type of close companionship relationship with a divorced individual will be visited by the elders to discuss where the friendship or

relationship is heading. They will be asked what their goal is in the relationship. They will be asked to consider how the relationship looks before others (the church family, family members and relatives, and other friends).

It will then be recommended that the two continue to “grow in grace” (2 Pet. 3:18) *outside* this relationship since this would represent the *best* testimony for the believer (Phil. 1:10). It will also be recommended that they develop relationships which would present a more wholesome testimony, dating only those who have NOT been divorced while their previous marriage partner is still living, or developing closer friendships (Prov. 27:17) with those of the same sex.

➤ **What if the two decide to stay within the relationship?**

As previously mentioned, practicing non-divorced *members* who keep dating a divorced individual will be approached by the elders and be strongly encouraged to no longer continue in the relationship with the divorced person for the sake of testimony. Individual church policy will vary on how to deal with this situation, but the church should not promote the appearance of evil in the congregation (1 Thess. 5:17). We will request that that the relationship be discontinued based on disorderly conduct (2 Thess. 3:6) and if there is refusal to do so, withdrawing their membership may be necessary and dismissal from the church. I recall a situation in one church where two divorced couples showed up in church. The problem was not that they were divorced but that they had swapped wives with one another in the whole process!

Although it is not the *best* testimony, if the two *nonmembers* choose to remain in a companionship-type relationship they **MUST** remain committed to singleness and purity at all times (1 Tim. 5:22) and recognize the potential for remarriage and sin. They must vow before God and each other to live in singleness and purity and NOT develop a type of relationship that leads to remarriage and adultery. Depending on their age and the natural tendency of male/female relationships, it can become increasingly difficult to remain single. This is why developing closer relationships with the opposite sex, especially at a younger age, is not advisable.

Here is some general advice. It’s much better for a divorced woman to develop friendships and be counseled or disciplined by another godly woman (Titus 2:3). The same is true for a divorced man. He should be counseled, disciplined (Matt. 28:19), and develop closer relationships with other men, as he learns and grows in church

life and ministry. In cases of divorce, while the previous partner is still living, closer friendships should always be developed with those of the same sex to demonstrate the *best* testimony. Remaining in a male/female relationship might lead to a growing and deepening relationship that results in remarriage and adultery. Of course, remarriage to a divorced person would become grounds for church discipline due to the adultery factor (1 Cor. 5:11).

Despite one's intent to remain unmarried, a person might be tempted to marry a divorced person (James 1:13-15) and cause adultery in the relationship. This would become a tragic mistake and put a blemish on the believer's testimony and life (James 1:27). Therefore, a believer should not place himself or herself in the place of temptation (Romans 13:14) by having a relationship with a divorced person. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

The naturally strong "feelings" that develop in a dating and close relationship can cloud one's judgment regarding the truth or what is right (Jer. 17:9) and lead a person down a wrong path to remarriage with a divorced person. *Feelings often win out over reason.* It's far better never to fan the flame of relational feelings toward a member of the opposite sex that has been divorced, since this might lead to marriage, adultery, and or fornication, depending on the nature of the person's previous marital status.

1 Corinthians 10:12

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

1 Timothy 3:7

"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

➤ **What is the church response if two people decide to get married when one or both are divorced?**

The church will show its disapproval of the marriage and adultery by not promoting or honoring the marriage in any way and in the case of *a member*, withdraw a person's membership from the local church assembly (Eph. 5:11). If the couple understands the church's position on divorce and remarriage, they would need to be married in another church that espouses a different position on divorce and remarriage.

Note: It is the elder conviction of this local assembly to not perform a marriage ceremony for any person that is divorced while that person's original spouse is still living. In doing so, he would be endorsing adultery (Eph. 5:11) and could not in good conscience (Rom. 14:23) perform the wedding ceremony.

➤ **What if the couple chooses to marry outside the church and then want to return to the church as a newly married couple?**

If this is the case, the couple must realize the error of their ways and confess their sin to the elders (James 5:13-20). Then, the church, based upon Scripture, should accept them back into fellowship and membership (2 Cor. 2:7). At this point, the pastor should do everything he can to help keep the marriage pure and intact. We must never condone any sin, but we also must forgive those that do sin (Eph. 4:32). Many who pass through divorce and remarriage can become effective and sensitive servants in local church life and ministry.

In some unique cases the elders will advise that a remarried couple find a different church fellowship. For instance, a remarried person might return to the assembly while a previous spouse is still in the church. This would create a difficult situation. Although forgiveness is shared by the church with those who are repentant of their ways, the new marriage relationship would be an oddity and potentially cause jealousy, confusion, and division, while former marriage partners are still serving in the local church.

1 Corinthians 14:33 declares:

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

➤ **Should a person ever remain unmarried?**

Sometimes it's better to remain unmarried when one's wife or husband dies, so you can better serve the Lord and be more effective in the work of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:27

"Art thou bound unto a wife (by the moral law of marriage)? seek not to be loosed (divorced from her). Art thou loosed from a wife (either by the death of the spouse as in 1 Cor. 7:39 or by already living in a state of freedom from matrimony ties)? seek not a wife."

Why shouldn't we seek a wife? It's because you may better serve the Lord without a wife or husband (1 Cor. 7:26-33). Much prayer and consideration must be sought before making the decision to remarry, even when you have the Biblical right to remarry after one's spouse dies (1 Cor. 7:39). For instance, as one grows older sometimes rash decisions are made regarding marriage because of the desire for companionship. In older age, a believer should not enter a marriage quickly, without much forethought and prayer, even when the two have the Biblical right to remarry (Ps. 32:8).

In these cases, many times some counsel is advisable with another godly friend (Prov. 11:14). However, remarriage is permissible and sometimes necessary when one partner dies, especially when a younger partner passes away (1 Cor. 7:9). God has not bound us to any previous covenant or marriage bond when a spouse dies. This is because death breaks the marriage covenant (1 Cor. 7:39).

➤ **Is God fair in commanding that one partner remain unmarried because of the sin of another partner?**

There is no conflict between what God *requires* and what is *best* for us. God is just in establishing the law of permanency in relationship to marriage (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 115:3; Isa. 14:27; Rev. 15:3). The outcries of the innocent parties which say, "But that's not fair," or more specifically, "God would not be fair if He established a rule like this," or "You can't expect somebody to suffer for another person's sin" point their finger directly at God. People have always questioned God's moral codes and ways. This is why the Scripture says to those who object to God's ways, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9:20). "But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." (Psalm 115:3).

The marriage vow has not changed. Marriage is to be "For better or for worse." Sometimes a marriage turns into a very difficult and irresolvable situation. However, God's unchanging law cannot be reversed (1 Cor. 7:39). Marriage is to be "Until death do us part."

In summary, we should not question God's ethical laws and dealings with mankind regarding divorce and remarriage. We must deal with divorce and remarriage on the basis of God's moral law which is eternal and applicable to both believers and

unbelievers alike. God always knows what is best for our personal lives. His laws transcend man's laws and ideas. His ways are not our ways.

In Isaiah 55:8 God declares:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

My purpose in writing this statement on divorce is to help God's saints to understand that divorce is not an acceptable alternative. To resolve any problem, a person must weigh the alternatives, then discard the unacceptable and pursue the acceptable. To divorce one's spouse is to elevate one's own will above God's and therefore sin (1 Sam 15:22-23).

Since God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16) and has established the permanency of marriage from the beginning (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:8), and since Jesus command that it be stopped (Matt. 19:6, Mark 10:9), and since Paul four times declares that there should be no divorce (1 Cor. 7:10-13), I would have to say that there are no legitimate, Biblical grounds for divorce.

Of course, some who have read this may be in despair and think: "There's no hope for me. I'm already divorced and remarried." Let me reassure you that there is hope for you since "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Your sin of divorce and remarriage is a sin that must be confessed like any other sin. Honest confession to God is important for when you confess your sins the Lord will forgive you and restore your relationship with Himself (1 John 1:7-9). As a result of forgiveness, your remarriage is no longer considered adulterous since you have been forgiven and cleansed.

Again, God has never instructed anyone to dissolve their present marriage contract to resolve the adultery issue (Deut. 24:1-4). God has only instructed a person to seek forgiveness and go on in life. You can blossom where you are at in the new marriage relationship and continue to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Find a Bible believing church that understands your heart's desire and begin to serve the Lord and remain faithful in the present marriage (1 Cor. 4:2).

Marriage reflects the indissoluble and permanent relationship that Christ has with the Church (Eph. 5:31-32). God would never divorce His Church, going back on His Word (Rom. 8:38-39), and we should follow this example for our marriage.

Dearly beloved, repentance, understanding, love, and forgiveness are some of the key words that need to be remembered from this statement on “Divorce and Remarriage.” Of course, people have differing opinions and conclusions on this matter, but this is what the Berean Bible Church has adopted as their official document on this subject in seeking to be faithful to the Scriptures and maintain unity among the saints. May God guide us in the truth, give us wisdom, and express loving concern toward the saints as we deal with this very delicate but important issue that is part of the local churches.