

Personal Questions that the Bible Answers

What does the Bible say about divorce and remarriage?

Before we search the Scriptures for the answer to that question, have a few passages ready to open: [Deuteronomy 24:1–4](#) and [Matthew 19:4–6](#).

Question 1 *Aside* from what God has put in his Bible about “divorce,” what do you think about “divorce”? . . . Is that *acceptable* to you? Is it *unforgivable* to you? Is it *sinful* in your opinion? . . .

In the Old Testament, Moses permitted a man to obtain a divorce for *almost any reason*. Now read [Deut. 24:1–4](#) . . . **Wow!** Look at the reason a few Bible translations provide: “He found something wrong with her” (MSG); “He finds something indecent about her” (NIV); “She does not please him” (NLT).

Q. What’s your take on what Moses, a prophet of God, wrote about grounds for divorce?

No matter what view we take on the issue of “divorce,” it’s important to realize what Father God, the Creator of mankind, says about “divorce” in another OT verse, **Malachi 2:16a**: “*For I **hate** divorce,*” says the Lord, the God of Israel.” (NASB, NLT, MSG)

Q. Why do you imagine God **hates** divorce? . . .

A. According to the Bible, marriage is a lifetime commitment. . . . “*Haven’t you read,*” he replied, “*that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate*” (**Matt. 19:4–6**).

It’s important to distinguish between “primary” and “secondary” theologies. Divorce and remarriage are “secondary” issues, which are controversial! [See Warren’s list](#) highlighting both theologies.*

Q. Is our heavenly Father *kind* and *considerate*? . . . **A.** Thankfully, God realizes that marriages involve two *sinful* human beings! So, divorces are *bound* to occur!

In the NT, we find that Jesus stressed that these divorce laws were given because of the hardness of people's hearts, ***not*** because such laws were God's desire. Read [Matt. 19:8](#).

So far, what have you learned about "divorce" in the Old and New Testaments? **Q.** Is divorce acceptable to you? To God? Unforgivable to you? To God? Sinful to you and God? . . .

In God's view, **marriage is a lifetime relationship that should never be severed by human action.** In extreme cases, **Q.** What are two grounds for divorce and remarriage: adultery and abuse?

- Adultery: When adultery takes place, a divorce can be obtained because adultery has already severed the marriage relationship; divorce formally acknowledges what's taken place.
- Abuse: For example: (1) when a husband so brutalizes his wife that it's impossible for her to live with him any longer; or (2) when a wife has so harassed or brutalized her husband that it becomes impossible for him to stay with her. When such things happen, whether or not the person actually moves out, the situation is the equivalent of desertion. That makes divorce and remarriage permissible.

There's no justification in the Bible for divorce, except for adultery and abuse! No grounds exist for divorce on the basis of (a) incompatibility, (b) lack of love, (c) differing career goals, etc. Frankly, it seems impossible that two born-again Christians, dedicated to serving Jesus Christ, can find any grounds for divorce!

Next, think specifically about "remarriage." **Q.** Is it acceptable to you? Unforgivable? Sinful? . . .

These are challenging questions to answer on our own. We'll now see what the Scriptures say about "remarriage."

“Remarriage” after a divorce is addressed directly by Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 7:10–11 NIV**. Paul says this about divorce and remarriage: *To the married, I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

Paul follows up pointedly in **vv. 12–14**: *To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*

Then see how he closes with **v.15**: *But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. . .*

In those six verses, Paul taught that if an unbelieving spouse leaves a believer, the believer is *not* bound to the marriage relationship but is free to remarry.

So, the biblical rules for marriages *between Christians* state that there shouldn't be divorces. If a divorce occurs, no remarriage should occur. But **v. 15** permits or “sanctifies” *believers* to divorce when a non-believing spouse opts to end the marriage.

Q. Having read and considered Paul’s verses, do you feel comfortable with Paul’s biblical answer?

Perhaps Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* version makes the remarriage issue pretty clear. Read **[1 Cor. 7:10–16 MSG](#)**.

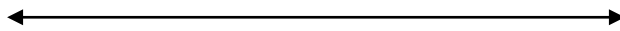
I've got a pair of closing questions about “remarriage.”

Q 1. If it’s acceptable for *some* people to remarry, how much time should pass before remarrying? . . .

Q 2. Can problems arise when people remarry promptly without “getting their bearings”? . . .

A. (*From GotQuestions Ministries*) Looking to quickly remarry after an *allowable* divorce can cause problems. After all, it might be God’s desire for the divorced person to remain single, even if he or she can biblically remarry. God sometimes calls people to be single so their attention isn’t divided; they’ll then have an opportunity to experience undivided devotion to the Lord ([1 Cor. 7:32–35](#) MSG).

So, “remarriage” after a divorce *may* be an option in some circumstances. But it isn’t the only option available!



Question:

What does the Bible say about divorce and remarriage? . . .

Answer: It’s very clear from God’s Word that he has instituted marriage to be between one man and one woman. He also *hates* divorce. The marriage contract is binding while both partners are alive. However, God recognizes that divorces will occur, even among his children.

The Bible *permits* divorce in *some* cases (e.g., when an unbelieving spouse leaves a believer, the believer is not bound to the marriage relationship, but is free to remarry). It doesn’t lift the faithfulness commitment of either partner. In effect, with the exceptions of adultery and spousal brutalization, divorced Christians are not to remarry, so long as the Christian partner is living.

A divorced and/or remarried believer shouldn’t feel any less loved by God, even if the divorce and/or remarriage aren’t covered under the two possible exceptions. **Father God definitely loves his divorced children and his remarried children!**

* Open and print Warren’s “[Primary and Secondary Theologies](#).”