

## Divorce

In recent years, divorce has become a common practice. Many Christians, even, find it to be acceptable. **However, divorce is not the will of God.** He created marriage to be something sacred between one man and one woman for one life time. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 says, <sup>10</sup> *To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. <sup>11</sup> But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

Even Jesus spoke about divorce. During his ministry, the Pharisees asked him where he stood on divorce. He responded by saying, *“‘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 his 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 man separate’”* (Matthew 19:4-6).

Many “Christian” reasons are given as explanations or justifications for divorce such as , “I’ve fallen out of love”, “We were not married in God’s eyes”, “They are not saved”, “God will forgive me”, “Divorce is no worse than other sins”, or “I committed adultery.”

However, God has a response for each of them. Here are some examples. Love is not easy; it is a choice that requires conscious effort. In 1 Corinthians 13, God shows us what we must choose to do in order to love someone. Just as we can choose to love someone in this way, we can choose not to love them; the choice is ours to make. Some excuse their marriage from God’s jurisdiction by saying it was a sinful marriage and try to make it right by divorcing their spouse. This only adds to the original sin.

The story of David and Bathsheba is an example of this. David committed many sins, even murder, to acquire Bathsheba as his wife. In spite of this, God did not tell David to divorce Bathsheba. *“‘The man who hates and divorces his wife,’ says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘does violence to the one he should protect,’ says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard and do not be unfaithful”* (Malachi 2:16).

Many believe it is biblical to divorce if their spouse is not a strong Christian or not a Christian at all. This is not the case, though. Instead of leaving, they are called by God to minister to that spouse in a loving biblical way in order to bring them to Christ. It is the non-believers choice to leave, not the believers. *“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”* (1 Corinthians 7:12-13).

It is true that God is a forgiving God; however, forgiveness requires true repentance. God wants you to recognize your sin and genuinely ask for forgiveness. God forgives when you change your ways and follow his will, not your own. God’s will for you is to remain married and biblically work things out, not run away from the difficulties through divorce. *“Here’s something else you do. You flood the Lord’s altar with your tears. You sob and cry because he doesn’t pay attention to your offerings anymore. He doesn’t accept them from your hands with pleasure. You ask,*

*'Why?' It's because the Lord is holding you accountable. He watches how you treat the wife you married when you were young. You have broken your promise to her. You did it even though she's your partner. You promised to stay married to her. And the Lord was a witness to it"* (Malachi 2:13-14).

We have seen that God does not condone divorce. At this point, however, it is important to explain that there are certain exceptions God has made. God will allow divorce if an unbelieving spouse desires a divorce. *"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"* (1 Corinthians 7:15). A person is also released from marriage if their spouse dies. *"For example, by law a married woman is joined to her husband as long as he is living. But suppose her husband dies. Then the marriage law no longer applies to her"* (Romans 7:2).

Unfaithfulness is also a reason for divorce. If a spouse commits sexual immorality, the faithful spouse may divorce them. *"A man may divorce his wife only if she has not been faithful to him"* (Matthew 19:9). These exceptions were created by God in order to protect believers from either the unbeliever or the unfaithful.