



*"What Does The Bible Say
About
Divorce and Remarriage?"*

Part 2

First of all, no matter what view one takes on the issue of divorce, it is important to remember [Malachi 2:16](#): "I hate divorce, says the LORD God of Israel." According to the Bible, marriage is a lifetime commitment. "So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" ([Matthew 19:6](#)). God realizes, though, that since marriages involve two sinful human beings, divorces are going to occur. In the Old Testament, He laid down some laws in order to protect the rights of divorcees, especially women ([Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)). Jesus pointed out that these laws were given because of the hardness of people's hearts, not because they were God's desire ([Matthew 19:8](#)).

The controversy over whether divorce and remarriage is allowed according to the Bible revolves primarily around Jesus' words in [Matthew 5:32](#) and [19:9](#). The phrase "except for marital unfaithfulness" is the only thing in Scripture that possibly gives God's permission for divorce and remarriage. Many interpreters understand this "exception clause" as referring to "marital unfaithfulness" during the "betrothal" period. In Jewish custom, a man and a woman were considered married even while they were still engaged or "betrothed." According to this view, immorality during this "betrothal" period would then be the only valid reason for a divorce.

However, the Greek word translated "marital unfaithfulness" is a word which can mean any form of sexual immorality. It can mean fornication, prostitution, adultery, etc. Jesus is possibly saying that divorce is permissible if sexual immorality is committed. Sexual relations are an integral part of the marital bond: "the two will become one flesh" ([Genesis 2:24](#); [Matthew 19:5](#); [Ephesians 5:31](#)). Therefore, any breaking of that bond by sexual relations outside of marriage might be a permissible reason for divorce. If so, Jesus also has remarriage in mind in this passage. The phrase "and marries another" ([Matthew 19:9](#)) indicates that divorce and remarriage are allowed in an instance of the exception clause, whatever it is interpreted to be. It is important to note that only the innocent party is allowed to remarry. Although it is not stated in the text, the allowance for remarriage after a divorce is God's mercy for the one who was sinned against, not for the one who committed the sexual immorality.

There may be instances where the "guilty party" is allowed to remarry, but it is not taught in this text.

Some understand [1 Corinthians 7:15](#) as another “exception,” allowing remarriage if an unbelieving spouse divorces a believer. However, the context does not mention remarriage, but only says a believer is not bound to continue a marriage if an unbelieving spouse wants to leave. Others claim that abuse (spousal or child) is a valid reason for divorce even though it is not listed as such in the Bible. While this may very well be the case, it is never wise to presume upon the Word of God.

Sometimes lost in the debate over the exception clause is the fact that whatever “marital unfaithfulness” means, it is an allowance for divorce, not a requirement for it. **Even when adultery is committed, a couple can, through God’s grace, learn to forgive and begin rebuilding their marriage.** God has forgiven us of so much more. Surely we can follow His example and even forgive the sin of adultery ([Ephesians 4:32](#)). However, in many instances, a spouse is unrepentant and continues in sexual immorality. That is where [Matthew 19:9](#) can possibly be applied. Many also look to quickly remarry after a divorce when God might desire them to remain single. God sometimes calls people to be single so that their attention is not divided ([1 Corinthians 7:32-35](#)). Remarriage after a divorce may be an option in some circumstances, but that does not mean it is the only option.

It is distressing that the divorce rate among professing Christians is nearly as high as that of the unbelieving world. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that God hates divorce ([Malachi 2:16](#)) and that reconciliation and forgiveness should be the marks of a believer’s life ([Luke 11:4](#); [Ephesians 4:32](#)). However, God recognizes that divorce will occur, even among His children. A divorced and/or remarried believer should not feel any less loved by God, even if the divorce and/or remarriage is not covered under the possible exception clause of [Matthew 19:9](#). God often uses even the sinful disobedience of Christians to accomplish great good.