

## “What God has joined together, Let no man put asunder”

**Mat 19:3** *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, 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 historical context was that there were two schools of rabbis, each with a different perspective about divorce. One proposed basically express divorce, where people can divorce for any reason, and the other allowed divorce only in the case of infidelity. The Jewish leaders were trying to trick and trap Jesus in aligning himself with one of these positions. Rather than coming out for divorce in cases of infidelity, Jesus returned to Adam and Eve instead.

### The Exception Clause

**Mat 19:7** *They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 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. 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.*

It is an error to think that getting a divorce will solve your marital problems. The will of God is that nobody should get a divorce. Moses did not give permission or God's blessing on divorce, but regulated civil problems. It is like when Moses commands that a thief should return what he has stolen. This is not to say that stealing is thereby approved, but that the Mosaic Law is taking care of responsibilities after a sin. Divorce in the OT was a way of clarifying a separation not for fornication (which demanded capital punishment).

This gave the woman “liberty” from being stoned. Even so Jesus put the matter clearly, in no case is divorce the will of God rather it is always wrong, bad, evil, and fraught with problems before, during, and after. So there is no “biblical permission” for divorce for any reason. Some mistakenly make conclusions from this **Matthew 19:9** passage (see left column) and ...

**Mat 5:32** *But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

They conclude that divorce is wrong “except” in cases of infidelity, in other words, fornication. But this translation is unfortunate. In **Mat 5:32** the Greek word is [parektos] which means “except for”. But this is only one of two translations, because another legitimate translation is “even for”. So an equally valid translation is “*even for the cause of fornication*” **Mat 5:32**. In **Mat 19:9**, there is a different construction [*me epi*] which is the dative in Greek, and is translated with “*upon the cause of fornication*”. The context of Matthew 19:9 is totally different from the other contexts, because divorce is not really the issue, but remarriage (without condemning nor allowing divorce). Jesus says that remarriage after divorce automatically causes the sin of adultery. He does not touch on permission nor conditions for divorcing, but like Paul's commentary in Romans 7 (discussed ahead), simply taking another spouse when the first still is living is adultery. No conditions mentioned, given, or allowed.

### Only the Unsaved get Divorces

**1Co 7:10** *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from [her] husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. 12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14 For the*

*unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.*

The rule for every Christian is that Christians don't cause, pressure for, or foment a divorce. Are you Christian? Are you pressuring or pushing for or initiating a divorce? Christians resolve their marital problems by the power and principles of God, and they fix their marriages.

**Rom 7:2** *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

Paul's understanding expressed here is that once married, a person cannot then get remarried (even though they divorce) without becoming an adulterer. Divorce is an escape for many people, so that when they get tired of trying, when they don't want to change their own lives to fix what is wrong, they dump the other person. Obedient Christians don't think this way, rather they think that marriage is until death, with the only remedy for problems is submission to God on their part, and prayer for their mate if their spouse is the problem. God has given us no way to dissolve marriage short of death, or entering into disobedience to God's will. But if the unsaved initiates a divorce and abandons the believer, the believer is not in sin (but likewise they are NOT FREE TO REMARRY without entering into sin again).

### And your Vows?

When two people marry (or live in common law marriage), then they enter into a commitment with that other person before God. Jesus said, “*what God has joined*”, indicating that in legal marriage or in common law marriage, there is a spiritual bond that God causes to happen which is God's ratification of that relationship. To live together as man and wife is a spiritual commitment and

whether you legally (before civil authorities) and religiously marry (in a church) or not, before God, you have an obligation. Jewish wedding ceremonies and celebrations (where we get our customs and practices) make the taking of a woman more formal, but in the OT “taking a woman” is to live with her, and the marital obligations begin.

**Ecc 5:4** *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: **pay that which thou hast vowed.** 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?*

God demands from us compliance with our commitments. If a person enters a business deal or commitment with another person, he is obligated to fulfill his promises. When a person marries, and then has problems, he is still responsible before God. God ratified the vows or commitment that you made with your spouse, and there is no “easy out”. You can run from your spouse, but you can never run from God. God will judge you and punish you here for abandoning your vows (marital or any other).

**Gal 6:7** *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. 9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

### **Is Divorce really a Solution to your Problems?**

The problem with most people wanting a divorce is that they don't understand that the factors that cause this relationship “to not work” are spiritual character flaws still in place, and leaving one spouse to find another simply doesn't fix anything, it just complicates everything. Marital problems exist because neither of the two people submits their lives to God's spiritual pattern. A believer

living with a sinful person should strive for their salvation and submission to God in prayer until it happens. In most divorces there is deep rooted hatred and antagonism between the two, which destroys love, or true love destroys this hatred.

### **“But you don't know how bad my spouse is”**

The assigning blame game is a popular game among couples with marital problems. The “*well he did this to me*”, and the response, “*but she did this*” is how this game goes. Divorce is a total failure on both sides, and this is because they damage their relationship, and they refuse to maintain it correctly. **Eph 4:32** *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

The reason why divorce is not of God is because God forgives us, and any child of God looking at divorce has to say, “*I will forgive no more offenses*”. Once you have said that, then ask yourself if God takes the same unforgiving spirit towards you, where would you be? Better said, where will you go after dying? God demands forgiveness on your part like He gives it to us. In **Mat 18:21-35** Peter asks, “*How many times does a Christian have to forgive an offense?*” Jesus answers with the parable of the unforgiving servant. God's judgment was to place the unforgiving servant in hell punishment (18:34). From that, we understand that an unforgiving spirit is a mark of being unsaved. Jesus says that God the Father will do the same to us if we do not forgive those that offend us. **Rom 12:21** says to not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. **1Cor 13:5** says that love does nothing “unseemly” (out of order), nor does it seek her own (rather seeks benefit for the other), and that it is not easily provoked, and “thinks no evil” (doesn't assign wicked motives to the other). Can you really say that you love as God demands (**1Jn 4:7-8**) when you refuse to forgive and work good instead of ill in your marriage?

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# **“Pastor, I am going to get a divorce”**

## **Considerations before getting a divorce**

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At times there are people that have so many problems in their marriage and for good or bad, they are firmly decided in getting a divorce. This tract is a presentation of things to think about before going forward, or better said, pastoral advice to avoid the problems a divorce will cause.

In this tract, I, as a pastor, will present answers and arguments that I have heard from people at these crossroads, and hopefully it will be of help to people who are honest and humble enough to accept good advice rather than being bull-headed and doing their own will no matter what spiritual and emotional damage it causes.