

How should you respond?

- A wife comes to you out of a physically abusive marriage to an alcoholic man who has no interest in getting help. She wants to know if she should leave him and can she marry another.
- A Christian comes into the church having been divorced (from another Christian) for ambiguous reasons. He wants to get married to another person who is a member of your church.
- A Christian wife discovers that her Christian husband has been unfaithful and is unrepentant. She does not want out but he does. If he divorces her she wants to know if she is free to remarry.
- Two people (both of whom were married and divorced before becoming Christians) want to get married. Their former spouses are not Christians but have not remarried.

Genesis 1:24

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

Observe: *This is a part of the cultural mandate of creation making marriage a common and universal part of God’s plan for man.*

Observe: *This text is the basis of all subsequent references to marriage and divorce.*

Observe: *Marriage is moving from being a ministry to having a ministry.*

Deuteronomy 24:1

*“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found **some indecency** in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house,-”*

Observe: *This is Descriptive not Prescriptive.*

Observe: *The meaning of “some indecency” is unclear.*

חִלְלֵל - “for just about any reason”

שְׂרָמַמָּא - “sexual offense”

Observe: *Jesus’ understanding of this text is revealed in Matthew 19:8-10*

Matthew 19:1-10

*“8 He said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9 ‘And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, **except for immorality**, and marries another commits adultery.’ 10 The disciple said to Him, ‘If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry’.”*

Observe: *Jesus looks to Gen.2:24 not Deut.24:1-4 for God’s plan.*

Observe: *Jesus is addressing the covenant community.*

Observe: *Jesus respects the principle of “damage control.”*

Observe: *The meaning of “immorality” (πορνεία)*

✓ *Used only in Matthew’s account.*

✓ *It is not the normal word for adultery. (μοιχεία)*

1 Corinthians 7

“10 But to the married I give instructions, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband 11 (but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away.”

Observe: *In repeating Jesus’ teaching Paul does not mention the exception clause.*

Observe: *The believer is never to initiate a divorce but always strive to preserve the marriage.*

1 Corinthians 7

*“12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. . . . 15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is **not under bondage** in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”*

Observe: *The context switches to a mixed marriage which Jesus did not address.*

Observe: *“not under bondage” = free to remarry Rom.7:2, 1 Cor.7:39 “death” = not bound and free to remarry in the Lord.*

1 Corinthians 7:27-28

“²⁷ Are you **bound** to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you **released** from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸ But if you should marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned.”

Observe: The context is still that of a mixed marriage where the unbeliever has left.

Observe: The “you” of vs.28 stands parallel to the “virgin” suggesting that Paul has a divorced person in mind when he says “But if you should marry, you have not sinned”

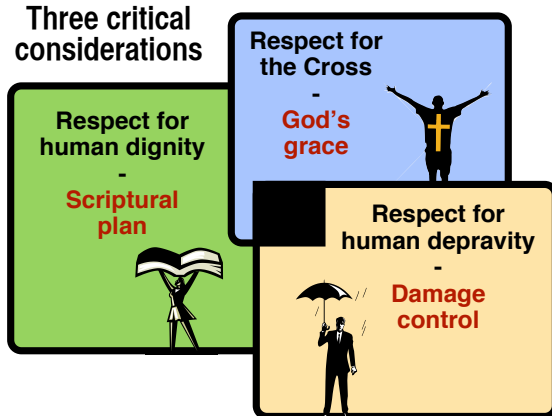
Observe: In the case of a broken mixed marriage Paul’s advice is to not remarry but there is freedom to remarry.

Three positions held by Christians

- **Annulment (unlawful marriage), but not divorce, is recognized by God with the freedom to remarry.**
- **Divorce is valid under certain circumstances but remarriage is not permitted.** Historical view of the church
- **Divorce (for whatever reason) implies the freedom to remarry.** Popular view of the culture

Pastoral wisdom

Three critical considerations



Conclusions

- Divorce is recognized in a fallen world, but it is not God’s will or perfect plan.
- Legitimate marriages between two Christians are not to be dissolved. If there is a separation there is no freedom to marry another without being guilty of adultery.
- In the case of mixed marriages the believer is to strive to preserve the relationship but if the unbeliever departs the believer may be free to remarry in that the first marriage is annulled as with a mixed marriage in the day of Nehemiah.
- In marriages and divorces before coming to Christ, grace is to apply.
- In a broken world “damage control” is often needed and must be respected (Deut.24:1).

Earning the right to a “Christian” divorce

- ✓ Have you made marriage a sacrificial ministry?
- ✓ Have you done everything within reason to build and save the marriage?
- ✓ Have you sought outside help early?
- ✓ Are you able to do this out of love not anger or fear?