

DIVORCE

God's Word is straightforward in addressing the issue of divorce. The following verses from both the Old and New Testaments speak clearly to biblical viewpoint on divorce.

Marriage is a covenant not to be broken. Though the marital relationship may have disintegrated to a disappointing level for any number of reasons, it is not beyond the scope of God's restoration:

So the LORD God caused the man to sleep very deeply, and while he was asleep, God removed one of the man's ribs. Then God closed up the man's skin at the place where he took the rib. The LORD God used the rib from the man to make a woman, and then he brought the woman to the man. And the man said, "Now, this is someone whose bones came from my bones, whose body came from my body. I will call her 'woman,' because she was taken out of man." So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.

Genesis 2:21-24 NCV

God made husbands and wives to become one body and one spirit for his purpose--so they would have children who are true to God. So be careful, and do not break your promise to the wife you married when you were young. The LORD God of Israel says, "I hate divorce. And I hate people who do cruel things as easily as they put on clothes," says the LORD All-Powerful. So be careful. And do not break your trust.

Malachi 2:15-16 NCV

[Jesus replied] "But when God made the world, 'he made them male and female.' 'So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.' So there are not two, but one. God has joined the two together, so no one should separate them."

Mark 10: 6-9 NCV

Now, for those who are married I have a command, not just a suggestion. And it is not a command from me, for this is what the Lord himself has said: A wife must not leave her husband...And the husband must not divorce his wife. *1 Corinthians 7:10-11 TLB*

Scripture teaches that there are two conditions under which divorce is biblically permissible, though never required: desertion by an unbelieving spouse, and sexual infidelity. One must keep in mind God's over-arching declaration from the book of Malachi that "I hate divorce."

But if the husband or wife who isn't a Christian is eager to leave, it is permitted. In such cases the Christian husband or wife should not insist that the other stay, for God wants his children to live in peace and harmony. For, after all, there is no assurance to you wives that your husbands will be converted if they stay; and the same may be said to you husbands concerning your wives. But be sure in deciding these matters that you are living as God intended, marrying or not marrying in accordance with God's direction and help, and accepting whatever situation God has put you into...

1 Corinthians 7:15-17a TLB, underlining added

"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." *Matthew 19:9 NIV*

Husbands and wives who profess to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are called to seek reconciliation in their marriages, through the authority of the church when necessary. Pastors working on the behalf of the couple can bring fresh insight and opportunity to the restoration process:

"If your fellow believer sins against you, go and tell him in private what he did wrong. If he listens to you, you have helped that person to be your brother or sister again. But if he refuses to listen, go to him again and take one or two other people with you. 'Every case may be proved by two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen to the church, then treat him like a person who does not believe in God or like a tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17 NCV