

The Debate about Divorce (Part 2)

Mark 10: 1-12

Today I hope to conclude the passage we began to consider in our last study. I am well aware that this is a very sensitive and somewhat contentious issue. Likely everyone here has been affected by divorce in some way or another. I too know the hurt and devastation it brings to the family and home. I was raised in a broken home due to my parents divorcing.

Jesus was approached and questioned by the Pharisees regarding this issue. They had no desire to learn of Him, and clearly were not interested in what He had to say regarding the matter. Their minds were already made up, and they merely sought to discredit Jesus. Unfortunately this is how most approach the issue today as well. Modern society has adopted a standard regarding divorce, and most approach the issue influenced more by modern standards than by biblical truth.

Again, it is not my intention to cause additional hurt to anyone affected by divorce, but we do need to consider this issue from a biblical perspective. God never intended for marriages to dissolve through divorce; He ordained they should endure for life. As we continue to examine the [truths](#) revealed by Jesus, I want to conclude our study of: [The Debate about Divorce](#). Let's take a moment for a quick review of our previous study.

I. A Tempting Word (2)

A. Their Question

B. Their Motivation

II. A Trusted Word (3-9)

A. The Response (3-4)

B. The Reality (5-6)

C. The Responsibility (7-8)

D. The Requirement (9)

III. A Timeless Word (10-12) – As Jesus and the disciples departed from the people, entering a house, the disciples questioned Him further. Jesus responded with a timeless word for all generations. Consider:

A. The Affirmation (11-12) – *And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.* ^[12] *And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.* Although they were in a private setting, Jesus affirmed what He had taught publicly. He spoke of:

1. The Separation Involved – Jesus spoke of a man or woman putting away their spouse. This bears a strong implication. It literally means “*to let go; dismiss; disown; or cast off.*” It has the idea of cutting all ties. We are all aware that divorce causes separation, but that puts it in perspective. It reveals the harshness and devastation of the separation. Keep in mind it was never God’s will for this to happen, [Vv.8-9](#).

- I have experienced the separation caused by divorce, being raised in a broken home. I have lived with the hurt and devastation of that separation. I know the pain of a home that was divided due to divorce. Often a couple feels divorce is the only option, but they never stop to consider the difficulty of the separation it always brings.
- Sadly it isn’t limited to physical separation. There is always an emotional and psychological separation as well. The scars and hurt of divorce heal very slowly, if at all.

2. The Sin Involved ([11-12](#)) – Jesus spoke of the adultery associated with divorce. Sin is always at the heart of divorce. I say that with a heart of love, but it is true nonetheless. You may have suffered a failed relationship that ended in divorce, by no fault of your own, but there was sin on the part of your spouse. You may have been faithful to the marriage relationship, seeking to work through the difficulty, but your spouse was engaged in an extramarital affair. Sin was at the heart of that affair. God intended for marriage to be for life and yet many times sin enters the relationship and it is terminated. I can think of no circumstance where sin is not directly involved with divorce.

3. The Succession Involved ([11-12](#)) – The devastation of divorce does not end once the papers are final. It has lasting effects that often affect other people. I will deal with the exception in a moment, but apart from that, those who marry divorced persons are engaging in adultery as well. Sin has consequences that are often far reaching. Divorce is no different; it always affects more than the two people that decided to get a divorce.

- This is a different aspect, but it is related to the succession of divorce: often children who grow up in broken homes are more likely to view marriage as temporary because of the example that was set before them. Typically one of two things happens: they will either follow in the footsteps of their parents, or they will determine to take a different path. Clearly the divorce rate in our society reflects the casual approach that many have regarding marriage. I always counsel couples to make a commitment that they will not resort to divorce as a solution to their problems.
- Now, before I move on, allow me to clarify something. The Lord stated that entering a marriage relationship with one who is divorced is entering an adulterous relationship. Those are

not my thoughts, but God's Word. However, I do not believe those who seek the Lord in repentance live in a continual state of adultery. If you are in that circumstance and have asked the Lord to forgive you, He has done just that. Being divorced and remarried is not the unpardonable sin. You do not have to live the rest of your life in guilt and shame. God is faithful to forgive and divorce is no exception.

B. The Exception (Mat. 19:9) – 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*. In order to faithfully deal with this issue we must look at the parallel passage in Matthew. This is what is commonly referred to as “the exception clause.” Jesus said that divorce results in adultery with the exception of fornication. Now I will admit, with the circumstances of my childhood, I wanted to believe that divorce and remarriage were never permissible under any circumstance. There are those who still hold that point of view and that is between them and the Lord. I told you at the beginning that it was not my desire to share my opinion, but to allow God's Word to speak for itself. To me it is clear that our Lord allows for divorce and remarriage when fornication is involved. This refers to any type of sexual sin. According to His Word they are free to remarry. (I have no way of knowing for sure in every circumstance, so I have chosen not to officiate weddings where divorce is an issue.)

- I also believe according to God's Word there is one more exception. Turn with me to [1 Cor.7: 10-16](#). These verses are not an encouragement for divorce. Paul urges those who are married to remain married, [v.10](#). Those who are saved and divorce are to remain unmarried, with the exception of fornication, [v.11](#). The remaining verses deal with a believer being married to an unbeliever. As long as the unbeliever is happy to stay in the relationship, the believer is to remain committed to the relationship. If the unbeliever chooses to depart, then the believer is no longer under bondage. This should only happen if one of them came to know Christ after the marriage vows were taken. If a believer chooses to marry an unbeliever, they knew what they were getting into from the beginning. God is never pleased with that situation and for that reason I will not knowingly perform a ceremony where one is a believer and the other is not. [2 Cor.6:14 – Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?](#)

C. The Expectation – I want to close with a word about the expectation regarding divorce. God never encourages or commands divorce. Once a couple has taken the vows of marriage, they are one flesh in His eyes.

- I have counseled with those seeking divorce who thought it was the only reasonable solution. I can never biblically encourage divorce, whatever the circumstance. It should be

removed from the Christian's vocabulary. Every effort should be made to reconcile the differences and make the marriage work. God is never pleased with divorce. [Mal.2:16 – For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.](#) God expects us to take our marriage vows seriously and seek to remain married. If you are unmarried and think you may get married at some point, I urge you to take your vows seriously and fully understand the expectations of the Lord.

➤ Allow me finish this study with the resolution for divorce. Again I want to emphasize that divorce and remarriage are not the unpardonable sin. Divorce results from sin, but if repentance has been made, one does not live in a continual state of adultery and sin. [1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.](#) You do not have to live the rest of your life in guilt and shame.

Conclusion: This has been a difficult study. I know it has been uncomfortable as well. I do not enjoy teaching on this matter, but I am convinced it is needful. I remember all too well the hurt and confusion I felt as a child trying to reconcile all of this in my mind. The hurt it caused in my life created a very legalistic attitude in me for a number of years. I hate to admit it, but I was often very critical and judgmental regarding this issue. I have asked the Lord to forgive me of my sin, and I now have a better understanding of divorce from a biblical perspective. If you have judged others unfairly, you need to repent of your sin.

I pray that we all realize the seriousness of marriage in the eyes of God. He never encourages or commands divorce. If you are married, seek the Lord to preserve the relationship you have. If you haven't made that covenant with the Lord and your spouse, I hope you both will agree that divorce will never be considered as a solution to your problems. If there are needs, there is hope and healing in Christ. He can forgive past sin and grant hope for the future.