

CHRIST FELLOWSHIP'S VIEW MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

MARRIAGE

Marriage is a special commitment between a man and a woman that is unlike any other commitment a person can make. Many times in a wedding the officiating pastor may state, "The institution of marriage should not be entered into lightly." He is biblically correct in saying these words.

1. Marriage was established by God, not by humans. Marriage was instituted by God at the time of creation and was deemed by him to be good. Therefore, the relationship does not just include the man and the woman, but it also includes God (Genesis 2:18-24).
2. Marriage was meant by God to be life-long. It was designed for lifelong intimacy between one man and one woman, only to be terminated by the death of either the man or the woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; 1 Corinthians 7:39).
3. The marriage relationship is to be built on the commands to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37), and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39).
4. Ideally, Christians should only marry other Christians (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).
5. Marriage is a reflection of Christ's love for his bride, the Church. As Christ is the head of the Church, men are to be the spiritual head of the family. Men are to follow Christ's example of leading through sacrificial love as they love their wives. As believers lovingly submit themselves to the authority of Christ, so wives are called to lovingly submit to the authority of their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-33).
6. Marriage is not just a partnership or a friendship. Husbands and wives are called to be one flesh (Genesis 2:23-24; Mark 10:8). This is a relationship like no other and establishes a level of commitment and oneness that, with the help of God, can last a lifetime.
7. Husbands and wives are called to give their bodies to one another willingly. Sex is never something to take from another or to withhold from one another (1 Corinthians 7:3-5).

DIVORCE

Couples that are struggling in their relationship can sometimes forget the joy and commitment they had while dating. They only see the pain they are currently in, and the vow they made to stay committed to each other during good and bad times seems an unreachable promise. Many couples believe their issues are too big for God to overcome; however, God specializes in the humanly impossible. Nothing is too hard for God.

1. There are times when a situation seems to go beyond what the couple can handle. However, this does not mean the couple should harden their hearts toward God who can help them redeem their relationship (Matthew 19:8, Philippians 4:13; Ephesians 4:32).
2. Divorce was not in God's plan for marriage (see Marriage #2). It distorts the picture of his unending love for his bride (see Marriage #5). In addition, there is harm done not only to the divorcing husband and wife, but also to the children and to the Church as a whole.
3. It is important to understand that God tolerates divorce in certain circumstances, however he never commands divorce in any circumstance (Matthew 19:7-9).
4. There are three circumstances in which God tolerates divorce. See Appendix A for our process for determining the next steps for each circumstance.
 - a. Adultery – Where there has been sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9).
 - b. Abandonment – Where a believing spouse has been deserted by an unbelieving spouse. The choice must be that of the unbeliever and not the initiative of the believer (1 Corinthians 7:12-16; Exodus 21:10-11).
 - c. Abuse – Where there is danger to the spouse or children due to physical or sexual abuse. In this case a separation is advisable. If the unrepentant party remains in sin, see #6 and #7 below.
5. Divorce is always a result of sin, but is not always a sin itself (Matthew 19:7-8).
6. Openness to reconciliation is usually preferred to divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). In the case of adultery, abandonment or abuse, the unrepentant spouse should be pursued by the offended spouse with the help of the church family (friends and/or Life Group) in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17 and Ephesians 4:32.
7. In the case of an unrepentant spouse, Matthew 18:17 instructs us to treat them as an unbeliever, in which case the instructions in 1 Peter 3:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 would apply.

8. In cases of a marital relationship that is destructive to either the spouse or the children by means of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, there is room to separate that does not require divorce. Again the offending individual should be handled according to the guidelines of Matthew 18:15-17 and reconciliation should be pursued if at all possible.

REMARRIAGE

Can a divorced person remarry?

This is a question that churches have struggled with for some time. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been called to a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-20), calling all people to be reconciled to God. Though consistently unfaithful to our Creator, he has faithfully pursued us that we may be reconciled to him. Since we have received reconciliation to God, it should be our goal to reconcile with a spouse that is unfaithful to his or her vows, as this is the higher calling rather than marrying someone else. However, there are occasions when formal marital reconciliation cannot happen without causing more sin and pain. If a divorce was made on biblical grounds, then remarriage is allowed.

1. Reconciliation is not advisable when the spouse has married another person. The marriage of one's divorced spouse to another person is viewed as a severing of the former marriage. In that case the unmarried spouse may marry another person.
2. Where the former spouse has not remarried, every opportunity for reconciliation should be made before any other relational commitments are made (including dating, engagement or marriage). See Appendix A for recommended steps.

Appendix A

If you are contemplating divorce, we ask that you go through the W.I.S.D.O.M. process in your decision-making:

Work the Issue

The issue should not be, "Do I have to stay with this person any longer?" Instead the question should be, "What can we do to heal our marriage?" Then if necessary, ask "Do I have biblical grounds to even consider divorce?" This is the issue you should be working through, since marriage is based on commitment and not based on our feelings.

Investigate the Bible

This document has included our interpretation of the Bible. Go back to God's Word for yourself and see what he inspired the authors to write. Start with the verses we have given you and research what God says.

Seek Counsel

We ask that you would involve your group leader, a pastor or elder to walk through this process with you. You need to talk to others that will help you go back to the Bible for your response. It is recommended you look to see what changes you need to make in your own life to help make your marriage better.

Develop Your Response

Once you have investigated the Bible to see what God has to say about marriage and divorce, go back to your issue, "Do I have biblical grounds to even consider divorce?" If it is clear that you do not, then seek Christian counseling (individual and/or marriage).

Openly Discuss

You need to discuss openly with the person you have enlisted to counsel you through this situation and also with your spouse. Be open to the Holy Spirit changing your heart and/or your spouse's heart through the course of this discussion. (Divorce papers should not be the way a spouse finds out about your discontent in the relationship. If you are concerned for your safety, be sure to have someone with you in the discussion.)

Move to Action

Once you have done all of the preceding steps, then consider your next points of action. With the goal of loving God with all of your heart, soul and mind and loving your neighbor as yourself, move to the proper biblical action.

For more information on this subject, see also the following messages by Bruce B. Miller:

1. *Unveiled: Foundations of Marriage Series, [When Adam Met Eve, Genesis 2-3](#)* (10.30.2011).
2. *Unveiled: [Foundations of Marriage Series, Roles in Marriage, Ephesians 5](#)* (11.06.2011).
3. *Unveiled: [Foundations of Marriage Series, Divorce and Remarriage](#)* (11.13.2011).

*Christ Fellowship's views on this subject are guided by the authoritative Word of God.
Not all biblical references in the Word of God relating to each principle are listed.
Biblical references are from the New International Version (NIV) 2011 unless otherwise noted.*