

## 57 Mark 10:1-12

# Divorce & Re-Marriage

## Text

**Transition:** And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.

**Crowds:** **2** And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” **3** He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” **4** They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” **5** And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. **6** But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ **7** ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, **8** and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. **9** What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

**Disciples:** **10** And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. **11** And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, **12** and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

## Introduction

**Thomas Brooks:** Remember this forever--everyone is that in reality, which he is at home. Many make a great profession, and have great abilities and gifts, and can discourse well on any pious subject--whose homes are not little heavens, but little hells. Some are very much like angels in public, saints in the church, and devils in their homes!

**Willaim Secker:** Secundus treated his wife like a servant! But surely he was a monster—and not a man! He was fitter for a tomb to bury him—than a womb to bear him!

We now embark on one of the scariest subjects that anyone can teach. Divorce and remarriage. I mentioned last week how common divorce is. I also mentioned how volatile of a subject it is. We now enter on the subject on which there is much division. So once again I must tread lightly. I want first to give the key passages and then to present the main positions that follow from those passages.

## Passages & Positions

I have printed out the more pertinent passages that deal with divorce. You may want to have that sheet hand because we will be going through each of them.

**Deuteronomy 24:1-4**

**Matthew 5:31-32**

**Matthew 19:9**

**Mark 10:11-12**

**Luke 16:18**

**Romans 7:2**

**1 Corinthians 7:10-15, 39**

All of these have something to say on the matter, but the linchpin of the whole debate is Matthew 19:9. There are a few interpretations that people hold, but I will limit my examination to the two positions that I think are most likely.

The **first** position is simply that a husband and wife may not get divorced unless one party is guilty of sexual immorality. If it is a legal divorce, then it is permissible to remarry.

The **second** position is the exact same thing save that the exception clause refers to the engagement period and not to marriage. Therefore, in this second view, once you are actually married, there can never be another marriage. If you divorce, whether legitimately or illegitimately, you may not remarry. Since this is most likely a view that is foreign to you, allow me to explain it a bit more.

Matthew 1:18-19 says, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly."

Notice that Joseph and Mary are engaged at this point, and are not yet officially married. Yet, they are referred to as husband and wife. Notice also that a certificate of divorce is necessary to dissolve this relationship. Finally, notice that Joseph is a righteous man.

As we fast forward in Matthew to Matthew 19:9, the subject of divorce and remarriage comes up. Jesus states, "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery." That is the main point. Then we have this modifying phrase, "except for sexual immorality." The reader of Matthew will likely have Joseph in mind since he was going to divorce his wife because of what seemed to be sexual immorality. So would Joseph have been guilty of adultery if he remarried? Do you see how that is a legitimate question that may arise in peoples mind? Thus Christ qualifies saying that in the case of sexual immorality during the engagement period, a person may divorce and be free to marry again.

The two positions once again: 1) If you get a lawful divorce, you may remarry. 2) If you have any divorce, lawful or not, you may not remarry. Let us now examine the question "Can there be marriage after divorce?"

## **Can There be Marriage After Divorce?**

### **Points of Agreement**

First, let's observe some points of agreement:

- Marriage is intended to be for life. Something has gone horribly wrong if a divorce occurs.
- Divorce is never commanded.
- Divorce is wrong, except in the cases of sexual immorality and abandonment.
- Remarriage, after an unlawful divorce, is wrong.
- Remarriage, after death is ok.

As we work our way through these passages, I am going to give arguments for both positions and then indicate which I find more convincing.

### **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then 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 of his house, and she departs out of his house, **2** and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, **3** and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, **4** then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.

#### **Pro**

This passage assumes the legitimacy of divorce and remarriage.

#### **Con**

This passage does not assume the legitimacy of divorce and remarriage, it simply states it as a fact. Moreover, the first man who put her away is not allowed to remarry her, even if her second husband dies.

### **Matthew 5:31-32**

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **32** But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

#### **Pro**

This passage assumes the exception of Matthew 19. Therefore, if it has been a lawful divorce, he is free to remarry.

#### **Con**

Look at the verbs and direct objects. "everyone who divorces his wife makes her commit adultery." This is the main thought. How does his actions cause her to commit adultery? It seems to assume the cultural norm which was that a woman would remarry after a divorce. But if she does that, it is adultery. However, in the event that she has been sexually immoral, then the fault is her own if she remarries. In short, he is the cause of adultery if he divorces unlawfully, but she is the cause if it was a lawful divorce.

## **Matthew 19:9**

And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

### **Pro**

A') *Pornea* is a broader term for sexual sins in general. Thus, lesbianism would be a just cause for divorce.

B) It is odd, when the context is marriage, for Jesus to bring up a non-marriage exception to divorce.

### **Con**

A) The term for sexual sin in this passage is *pornea*. This indicates that they are not officially married because if they were married it would be called adultery, which is a different word.

B') The non-marriage exception is a natural one since betrothed couples were referred to as husband and wife, and since a certificate of divorce (which is the subject) is required to break off the engagement.

C) The response of the disciples in Matthew 19 indicates that remarriage is impossible.

## **Mark 10:11-12**

And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, **12** and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

### **Pro**

This passage assumes the exception of Matthew 19:9.

### **Con**

No, this passage stands on its own. It says that anyone who remarries after a divorce commist adultery - no exceptions.

## **Luke 16:18**

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband committs adultery.

### **Pro**

This passage assumes the exception of Matthew 19:9.

## **Con**

You are reinterpreting these passages in light of Matthew, why can we not understand Matthew in light of these passages? If Matthew can be understood in such a way that each passage can be read and understood on its own terms, is not that preferable?

## **Romans 7:2**

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.

## **Pro**

Paul is merely mentioning that marriage is intended for life.

## **Con**

Yes, but he does state that she is bound to him for life, thus another exception must be read into that passage to justify another marriage.

## **1 Corinthians 7:10-15, 39**

To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband **11** (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

**12** To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. **13** If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. **14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. **15** But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

**39**A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

## **Pro**

If the person is not bound to their husband/wife anymore, this can only mean that they are free to marry.

While there are different terms used in 1 Cor 7 for separation and divorce, these different terms were often used interchangeably in ancient Greek usage.

## Con

The term used in 1 Cor 7 for "separate" is different from the term used for "divorce."  
There is no mention of remarriage in 1 Cor 7. But that is the very question. One may not assume what he needs to prove.

## Conclusion

I have not yet come to a settled opinion on this matter of divorce. That is part of the reason I took you on this journey with me. I have come to a much greater appreciation for what God has given to us in marriage. I have a higher view of marriage now, and I had a pretty high view before. It is not very easy to dismiss the view that there is no re-marriage after divorce. That can have an effect on your thinking.

With anything in life, if you have just one shot at it, there is more preparation preceding it, and greater concentration put into it. If someone say, "You have one chance to pass this driver's test" would you not put an extra amount of work and study into that test? Would you not take it more seriously?

If you knew that the first house you bought would be the only house you could ever own, would you not put more thought into that purchase? Do you plan on having children? How many? Can the house accommodate growth? What if you lose your job? Could you weather that time of unemployment? What about location? Where will the neighborhood be in 10 years?

As I said, I have not come down firmly on one side or the other. But my study over the last few weeks have been eye-opening. Just wrestling with the possibilities makes one more thoughtful about marriage. No matter which side you come down on, this exercise will hopefully reinforce the notion that marriage is intended for life. We would do well to take it more seriously. Too often, even as evangelicals, we enter into it too lightly. We may doctrinally view marriage as being for life, but in the back of our mind we think "eh, if for some crazy reason we divorce, I can just remarry." We may not ever say it. We may not ever think it explicitly. Still, the hope for a second chance tends to draw down our conviction that marriage really is for life.

**Prov 5:15-23** Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. **16** Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? **17** Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. **18** Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,

**Prov 12:4** An excellent wife is the crown of her husband,

**Prov 18:22** He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.

**Prov 19:4** House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.

**Prov 31:10-11** An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. **11** The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

**Ecc 9:9** Enjoy life with the wife whom you love

**Malachi 2:15** Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

**Spurgeon:**

God save us all from wives who are--

angels in the streets,  
saints in the church,  
and devils at home!

I have never tasted of such bitter herbs, but I pity from my very heart those who have this diet every day of their lives.

HUSBANDS should try to make home happy and holy.

It is an ill bird that fouls his own nest- a bad man who makes his home wretched.

Our house ought to be a little church, with "Holiness to the Lord" over the door;  
but it ought never to be a prison, where there is plenty of rule and order, but little love and no pleasure.

Married life is not all sugar, but grace in the heart will keep away most of the sours.