

“The Truth About Marriage”

Matthew 19:1–12

The Authority of the King

Introduction

The pain of divorce is unimaginable for someone who’s never been through it. Sadly, a lot of people have been through it. According to the CDC, in 2022 there were 673,989 divorces reported in the United States. Over the past few decades, the divorce rate has been gradually declining, but that’s because more people are living together and fewer people are getting married.

40–50% of first-time marriages end in divorce. But there are a number of factors involved that can greatly reduce a person’s chance of divorce:

FACTOR	DECREASE IN RISK OF DIVORCE
Abstinence before marriage	50%
No cohabitation before marriage	50–80%
Married at age 18 or older	24%
First child after marriage	24–66%
Household income of \$50K or more	30%
Parents not divorced	14%
Share same faith	35%
Attend church together weekly	47%

(Statistics from “What is the actual Divorce Rate?” by Focus on the Family)

In verses 4–6, Jesus identifies 4 truths about marriage that transcend time and culture.

I. The Blueprint for Marriage

1. Marriage is designed by God (v. 4)
2. Marriage is between one man and one woman (v. 4; cf. Genesis 1:27)
3. Marriage is a powerful and profound physical union (v. 5–6; cf. Ephesians 5:31–32)
4. Marriage is a lifelong covenant (v. 6; cf. Malachi 2:14; cf. Ezekiel 16:8)

1 Corinthians 7:39 – “A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives.”

II. The Grounds for Divorce

Verses 7–9: The Pharisees debated endlessly about what “indecency” meant in Deuteronomy 24:1–4 and what the grounds for divorce were. Jesus clarified that Moses did not command divorce. He only permitted it because of the hardness of their hearts.

There are two grounds for divorce specifically mentioned in the New Testament:

1. Adultery

Matthew 19:9 – “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

“Immorality” – Greek: *porneia*. A broad term that included all kinds of sexually immoral activity, including adultery, incest, homosexuality, or bestiality. Jesus used a general term to cover any sexual act that would constitute adultery in the marriage relationship.

2. Abandonment by an unbelieving spouse

1 Corinthians 7:12–15 – “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... But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved.”

III. The Problem of Remarriage

Are Christians allowed to get divorced and remarry? It depends on the situation.

Scenario 1: Married to an unbeliever, they file for divorce. Free to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:12–15).

Scenario 2: New believer, divorced prior to becoming Christian. Free to remarry (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Scenario 3: Spouse committed adultery. Free to initiate divorce and remarry (Matthew 5:31–32). Divorce is permitted, but certainly not required. Forgiveness and reconciliation are possible.

Scenario 4: Married to a believer, no biblical grounds for divorce. Remain married and work on improving the marriage. Divorce and remarriage is an act of adultery (Mt 19:9).

1 Corinthians 7:10–11 – “To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.”

Only two options allowed: (1) Resolve problems and be reconciled. (2) If divorce occurs, remain single for the rest of your life.

Scenario 5: Divorced as a Christian and currently remarried. Recognize what you’ve done. Ask God to forgive you. And move on. Divorce is a grievous sin, but it’s not the unpardonable sin. God recognizes your current marriage, honors your new vows, and desires to bless your relationship. Make it the greatest marriage you possibly can.

IV. The Gift of Singleness

Verses 10–12: There are many benefits to being single (1 Corinthians 7:26–38). Singleness is a special gift and a high calling to serve the Lord without distraction or divided loyalty. Singleness is not second best compared to marriage. It is blessed and beautiful. All that matters is that we are faithful on whichever path God has called us to.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How has your life been impacted by divorce personally?
2. What did you learn about God’s blueprint for marriage?
3. What do you believe are the biblical grounds for divorce, if any?
4. Do you think it’s okay for Christians to get divorced and remarried again? How do you arrive at your conclusion based on Scripture?
5. What are some of the biblical benefits of being single?