

# 1 Corinthians

## *Gospel-Centered Living in a Sin-Centered World*

### Section 2: Purity and the Gospel

#### Purity in Marriage – 2a: Relationally

##### *1 Corinthians 7:10-11*

### Introduction

US Divorce Statistics 2024 from Forbes<sup>1</sup>

50% of 1<sup>st</sup> marriages end in divorce

Avg. length of marriage prior to divorce is 8 years

64% Men and 52% women remarry after divorce

40% of new marriages involve a previously divorced person

67% of 2<sup>nd</sup> marriages end in divorce

73% of 3<sup>rd</sup> marriages end in divorce

Total number of divorces in the US are declining but so are the total number of marriages. The percentage of divorce per marriage remains the same.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/legal/divorce/divorce-statistics/>

Most people think of purity in marriage being limited to the physical.

**Hebrews 13:4 (NKJV) — 4** Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

But the most important aspect of purity in marriage is relational.

This is where Paul now turns in this section where he has been addressing Purity and the Gospel.

Having answered the questions of the Corinthian believers regarding sexual immorality and biblical sexuality, he turns to answer their questions concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Remember the context, the Corinthian church has been heavily influenced by the culture and philosophy of the day which led many to embrace two extremes: hedonism (I can do whatever physically and it doesn't matter) or asceticism (I must deny all physical desires because they are evil).

Since he has addressed the physical purity in marriage, he now addresses relational purity beginning with ...

## Purity in the Marriage of Believers (10-11)

Paul begins with the God's ideal desire for marriages between believers. This is clear because in verse 12 he begins with, "If any brother has a wife who does not believe."

**READ:** 1 Cor. 7:10-11

“There is a marked change of tone in 7:10. Instead of the previous, ‘I say,’ Paul is more assertive, ‘I give this command,” (Taylor, 172)

This is a clear and uncompromising command. One that runs contrary to both our current cultural view and, as a result, the reality of the state of marriage in the church.

“Jesus was uncompromising in his teaching on divorce and remarriage, in a way that makes many of us uncomfortable.” (Wilson, 78)

Most often when addressing this issue, these verses are immediately followed with the question, “Well, what about ...” or, if one has read the Scriptures concerning this topic, “Well, what about the exception clauses?”

“Why Paul omitted the exception clause is a matter of speculation.” (Taylor, 172)

Let’s take a look at those other passages.

**Malachi 2:16a (NKJV) — 16a** “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce ...”

**Luke 16:18 (NKJV) — 18** “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

**Mark 10:2–12 (NKJV) — 2** The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him. **3** And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” **4** They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate

of divorce, and to dismiss her.” **5** And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. **6** But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ **7** ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, **8** and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. **9** Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” **10** In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. **11** So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. **12** And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

**Matthew 5:31–32 (NKJV) — 31** “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **32** But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

**Matthew 19:3–10 (NKJV) — 3** The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” **4** And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ **5** and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? **6** So then, they are no longer

two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” **7** They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” **8** He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. **9** And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” **10** His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”

So, what do we do with these verses? Are they complimentary or contradictory? Is Matthew’s exception assumed in Mark and Luke or is Matthew added a genuine exception, or is Matthew saying something different than is traditionally thought to have been said?

“The attitude of the authors of Scripture was that of a unified rejection of divorce. It is commonly said in evangelical circles that divorce is recommended in the case of adultery. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even if the so-called ‘exception clause’ ... be granted, still it is apparent that Jesus did not intend that one seek divorce in the case of unfaithfulness; but rather he noted that Moses allowed this ‘because of the hardness of your hearts,’ adding that ‘from the beginning it was not so.’” (Patterson, 116)

I lean toward the position that there really is no exception clause, not only because of the New Testament texts, but also because of the book of Hosea, and the fact that God uses marriage as an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church which I know can never be broken. However, the truth is that I don't know.

What is clear is that God's desire for and design of marriage is far more serious than that of our culture and that divorce between believers, if ever condoned by God, is limited to adultery.

What is equally clear is that divorce/separation for other reasons outside of adultery was occurring then and still occurs now. If it becomes necessary because of other reasons, in neither case, is remarriage condoned.

"The only option following a separation/divorce is to remain unmarried or to be reconciled, which Paul also may have derived from Jesus' teaching ... (Matthew 5:32) (Taylor, 172)

This comes as a shock to us because divorce in our culture always assumes remarriage. And people react with, well then no one should get married, which is exactly what the disciples said!

Why would God say not to remarry? Because God's desire for a broken marriage is always reconciliation – "remain unmarried or be reconciled." Remarriage means reconciliation is no longer an option.

**Deuteronomy 24:1–4 (NKJV) — 1** “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, **2** when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, **3** if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, **4a** then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD ...

“In God’s eyes that union has never been broken. These are not a counselor’s suggestions, but the Lord’s commands.” (MacArthur, 165)

“Far better that there be confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation; but if these are out of the question, then the innocent party may get a divorce; first, every means available should be used to restore the marriage.” (Wiersbe, 591)

But restoration/reconciliation requires repentance.

**ILLUS:** The restoration of our relationship with and our reconciliation to God.

“Where there is repentance, there can be restoration.” (MacArthur, 165)

Conclusion

God desires for marriage to be permanent<sup>2</sup>

God allows for separation in a troubled marriage

God always desires for reconciliation to take place

Divorce and remarriage among believers, [with the possible] except[ion] for sexual unfaithfulness, is [unbiblical]

INVITATION:

Believers whose marriage is great or God has restored.

Believers whose marriage is troubled and or divorced/separated. Repent and reconcile.

Believers who are divorced and are remarried

This may be a completely new understanding for you. God's desire for you is to now honor Him in this marriage. Confess the sin and commit the marriage to Him.

If you do, He is faithful and just to forgive.

If you have, He has cast that sin as far as East is from West. He can and will draw a straight line with a crooked stick.

Believers who are looking toward marriage. Be careful in seeking the Lord not in seeking a spouse and know God's desire and standard for marriage.

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<sup>2</sup> Akin and Merritt, 141