–Save This Page as a PDF–

A Biblical View of Divorce
7: 10-16

A biblical view of divorce DIG: What does the Bible say were biblical grounds for divorce? Some rabbis allowed divorce for nearly any reason a husband wanted it? What was their casual attitude towards divorce promoting? How were they misusing Moses' allowance for divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1)? What inner quality is Yeshua seeking instead? What are the legitimate grounds for divorce? Is divorce the unforgivable sin? Does divorce cause a person to lose their salvation? What are the consequences of divorce in this life and the next? What are the two choices for an illegitimate divorce among believers?

REFLECT: In today's contemporary society (even Jewish culture), how easy is it to get a divorce? How can you apply the principles of marriage stressed here? Do you think the Lord would give the same response to someone in a troubled marriage that asked sincerely, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" Why or why not? What do you need to work on to have the marriage God desires? When divorce does occur, what hope does Yeshua offer someone? What steps can you take to give yourself the best chance possible of never being divorced?

Apparently some of the believers in Corinth were asking, "If I am divorced, can I get remarried?"
And, "What should I do if I am married to an unbeliever?"



Guidelines for believers married to other believers (7:10-11): To those who are married I have a command, and it is not from me but from the Lord (7:10a): In case there be any doubt as to the source of the teaching here, **the apostle** adds: **It is not from me but from the Lord. Yeshua** taught the truth during **His** earthly ministry. Quoting from **Genesis 2:24**, **Yeshua** said: **This is why a man is to leave his father and mother and stick with his wife, and they are to be one flesh,** and then **He** added: **Thus, they are no longer two, but one. So then, no one should split apart what God has joined together** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Ij – Is It Lawful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?**). In answer to the apostles' question, **Yeshua** explained that **God** allowed **Moshe** to permit **divorce** only because of **His** peoples' **hardness of heart**, and that it was permissible only in the case of **adultery** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dj – It Has Been Said: Do Not Divorce**).

Paul first stated the general policy to be followed: **A woman is not to separate herself from her husband. But if she does separate herself.** This is the second best advice – "Don't do this! **But if** you do, then proceed as follows . . . " **she is to remain single or be reconciled with her husband. He** followed this with similar instructions to men: **A husband is not to leave his wife (7:10b-11).** The terms **separate** and **divorce** were not distinguished in **Paul's** day as they are in many churches today. To **separate** was to **divorce**. If **a believer** does **divorce** another **believer**, except for **adultery**, neither partner is free to marry again. For cases of illegitimate **divorces**, **the** inspired **apostle** offered two choices: **They** need to stay **single** or reconcile with **their** former **spouse**. In **God's** eyes the union had never been broken.[188]

These are not a counselor's suggestions, but **the Lord's** commands.

In a culture in which **divorce** has become something of a norm, this text has

understandably become a bone of considerable contention. Some find **Paul** and **Yeshua** too harsh and try to find ways around the plain sense of the text. Others turn the text into law and make **divorce** the worst of all sins under heaven. Neither of these seems an appropriate response. On **the one hand, there is little question that both Paul and Yeshua disallowed divorce between two believers**, especially when it served as grounds for remarriage.

One the other hand, **Paul** does not raise this norm to a law. **Divorce** may happen, and such a person is not to be ostracized from the church. But what was not allowed was remarriage, both because for him that presupposes the teaching of **Yeshua** that such is **adultery** and because in the church reconciliation is the norm. If the believing husband and wife cannot be reconciled to each other, how then can they expect to become models of reconciliation before a fractured and broken world.[189]

I hate divorce, God declared through **His prophet (Malachi 2:16)**. You don't need a PhD in clinical psychology to understand why. No one comes through a **divorce** unscarred – not the husband, not the wife, nor the children. The collateral damage from every **divorce** is incalculable. **Divorce** not only destroys families; **divorce** tears at the very fabric of society. When **God** designed marriage and created the family, **He** did so with the intention that marriages would last a lifetime.

That being said, **divorces** do happen. When they do, it is incumbent upon a church to become a hospital for wounded souls, who lavish upon a repentant **divorcee** the love and support they need in order to rebuild their life. **Divorce** is not the scarlet sin (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Em – Whoever Blasphemes Against the Holy Spirit Will Never Be Forgiven**). **Divorced** individuals should not be ostracized, degraded, or made to feel as though **they** are second class **believers**. **God** forgives **divorce**. So should we.[190]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **Your** love that is so deep that when there is a repentant heart – no sin is unforgivable. The unforgivable sin, blasphemy against **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, means the heart is not repentant for it is not sorry but is full of pride and not listening to **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. How wonderful that when the heart grieves in a godly way, there is **repentance** that leads to salvation and desires to be done with sin. **For the grief that God wills brings a repentance that leads to salvation, leaving no regret. But the world's grief brings death. For see what this very thing- this grieving that God wills – has brought you! What diligence, what defense, what indignation, what fear,***

what longing, what zeal, what rendering of justice! In everything you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter (Second Corinthians 7:10-11).

*When someone in holiness fears to offend **You, Lord,** then their **repentance** opens the door for **You** to forgive them- no matter what has been done.* ***For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so Adonai has compassion on those who fear Him (Ps 103 11-13).*** *Thank **You** for being such a compassionate, loving and forgiving Heavenly **Father**. In **Yeshua's** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Guidelines for believers married to unbelievers who want to stay married (7:12-14): Yeshua, in the course of **His** ministry, had never addressed this issue. But **Paul**, with no less authority did. With two sets of perfectly balanced sentences, **he** says that **believers** are not to initiate **divorce** proceedings: **To the rest I say – I, not the Lord: if any brother has a wife who is not a believer, and she is satisfied to go on living with him, he should not leave her. Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband who is satisfied to go on living with her, she is not to leave him (7:12-13).** While **Paul** does not reflect on this here, it certainly must have been difficult for **a woman** in **Corinth** to stand out alone in a **marriage** and to accept **Yeshua Messiah** as **her Lord** and **Savior**. In most cases in Greco-Roman society, the religion of **the father** in the family was the religion of the whole household **(Acts 16:33-34)**. Undoubtedly, then, for a **wife** to go against the religion of the household and become **a believer** must have, in some cases at least, led to intense friction in the home.[191]

Believers married to **unbelievers** were not to worry that **they**, **themselves**, **their marriage**, or **their children** would be defiled by the unbelieving **spouse**. On the contrary, just the opposite is true. **Divorce** was to be avoided because the believing **spouse** was, and is, a channel of **God's** grace in **the marriage**. **For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband.** Being **unequally yoked** (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Bi – Do Not Be Unequally Yoked with Unbelievers**), one flesh with **an unbeliever**, can be frustrating, discouraging, and even costly. But it need not be defiling because one **believer** can sanctify a home. **Sanctified** here refers to *being set apart*. **Sanctification** in this context is matrimonial and familial, not personal or spiritual.

Furthermore, **God** looks on the family as a unit. Even if it is divided spiritually, and most of its members are unbelieving and immoral, the entire family is sanctified by **the believer** among them. Therefore, if an unbelieving **spouse** is willing to stay, **the believer** is not to seek a **divorce**. **Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy (7:14 NIV).** Just the presence of one **believer** will protect **the children**. It is not that **their** salvation is assured, but that **they** are protected from undue spiritual harm and that **they** will receive spiritual blessing because **they** share the spiritual benefits of the believing parent. Often the testimony of the believing parent in this situation is especially effective, because **the children** see a clear contrast to the unbelieving parent's life, and that leads them to salvation.[192]

Guidelines for believers married to unbelievers who want to leave (7:15-16): Paul now moves to the next step; there is an exception to the rule of no **divorce**. **But if the unbelieving spouse leaves** (Greek: *chorizo*, meaning *separate*)**, let him leave.** In keeping with the whole argument, **Paul** once more qualifies the ideal with an exception. **The believer** may not pursue **divorce**, but if the **pagan** wants to **leave**, let **them** do so. This verse does *not* say, "If the pagan begins **divorce** proceedings." Words mean something, and *chorizo* simply means *to separate,* or *to leave*. If **a wife** had to rely on a vindictive fleeing pagan **husband** to begin **divorce** proceeding, **she** would be left in a state of **slavery**. **Her** only crime was faith in **Messiah**. However, **in circumstances like these, the brother or sister is not enslaved,** and is able to **divorce** and remarry. **God has called you to a life of peace,** not **slavery (7:15).**

Marriage was not designed for an evangelistic tool. Missionary dating is a bad idea; and missionary **marriages** are bad if **the unbelieving spouse leaves**. Far too many young brides or grooms have been *led away from* **Messiah** as a result of the influence of **the unbelieving spouse**. **For the wife** has no assurance that **she will save her husband**, and **the husband** has no assurance that **he will save his wife (7:16)?** To cling to **a marriage** in which the pagan is determined to end would inevitably lead to frustration and tension. The certain strain is not justified by the uncertain result. The guiding principle must be **peace**.[193]