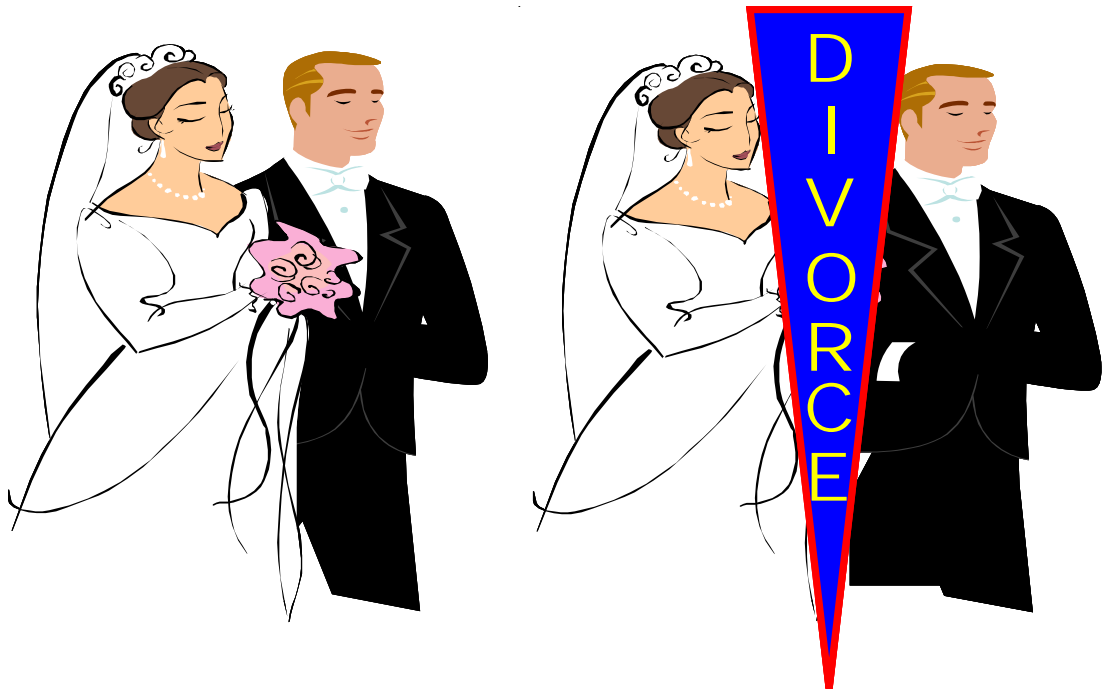


# *Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage*



**Biblical Examinations  
Of An Emotional &  
Controversial Subject**

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# Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage: An Emotional & Controversial Topic

## Lesson 1 – General Introduction

### Overview

Although the kingdom of Jesus Christ is indeed a spiritual one (**Jn. 18:36; Rom. 14:17**), it does exist in a physical realm (**Jn. 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:10**). The citizens of this kingdom constantly interact with and are confronted by citizens of Satan's kingdom (**1 Jn. 5:19**). Even though Christians find themselves in situations similar to unbelievers because we live with them in the world, saints must operate at higher principles than do their unbelieving counterparts (**Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:1-2**).

Marriage is one of these "situations." Often, it is heard in discussions re: marriage, "A marriage according to God...a marriage according to man." This is not Biblical. We cannot find one verse in the Scripture where the Lord or one of His apostles ever spoke with this terminology. Even if the marriage and/or divorce doesn't meet with Divine approval, it is still just that...a marriage and/or a divorce.

The difference lies in what attitudes or level of respect two people bring to this relationship. At one time, almost everyone was willing to admit what the Scripture boldly proclaims: "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God shall judge*" (**Heb. 13:4**). Nowadays, the institution of marriage has lost the respect it once enjoyed. The world lampoons the notion of remaining a virgin until marriage or being faithful to your spouse until death. Newspapers are now filled with "advice columnists" who advocate divorce for any reason whatsoever when married partners encounter problems. The foundations of the family have been crumbling for decades. Let's not candy coat it... the scourge of unfaithfulness and divorce has been at epidemic proportions for years. What once was viewed as the "exception to the norm" has now become the norm. If anyone disagrees, consider the following brief synopsis from Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 classic *The Scarlet Letter*.

*Set in Puritan New England (Boston), the story centers on Hester Prynne. She commits adultery and eventually gives birth to the resulting child. When her sin becomes known, her punishment is mainly two-fold. She is forced to stand on the scaffold in the town square for 3 hours to endure public ridicule and humiliation. She must also wear at all times a "scarlet letter A" sewn onto her garments to denote her shame and sin.*

Public outcry on this level against adulterous behavior has long since evaporated. This sin (*along with most other sins*) has lost its sense of shame (**cp. Ezra 9:6; Jer. 6:15; 8:12; 1 Tim. 2:9**).

It seems like everyone (including politicians stumping for votes) are willing to admit the family is the basic unit...the "bedrock of our society." The problem is that few are willing to agree on and admit the following:

- The family's Divine origin
- The Biblical definition of the family...one man & one woman  
*[a reference to the current movement re: "homosexual marriages"]*
- The determination to regulate their marriage to Biblical teaching

# Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

## Lesson 1

The marriage, divorce, and remarriage situation affects everyone. Ask a teacher...how many children in the classroom have the same last name as both parents? How many even have 2 parents? Which one is in the majority...biological or step-families? Step-parents are now all too common as a result of divorces and remarriages. No-fault divorces have simplified the legal process in most of our states, making divorces far too easy to obtain. However, the courts now hesitate to even list adultery as the cause for divorce.

When a marriage is not governed by what the Bible teaches, one can be sure troubling times and monumental challenges will face that family. The man & woman who at one time openly pledged their undying love and fidelity to each other eventually begin to act in ways that are directly opposite to what they vowed before God and man. If the relationship sours enough that one of them ventures off into the bed of adultery, the heart of the faithful spouse left behind is virtually and literally ripped out and trampled in ways that may be unrecoverable. If any children are born to that union, many times they suffer tremendously as "innocent victims." This is especially evident if the divorce turns nasty, and they become nothing more than "human pawns" in the ensuing custody battles. When the dust settles they, too, are losers. They are now bereft of the full-time joint presence of a father and mother in their lives.

Local churches are also drawn into this mess. Problems are often encountered when attempts are made to conduct home Bible studies. It sometimes becomes apparent there could be an unscriptural marriage that will eventually have to be addressed if the prospects continue to show interest in the gospel. Within congregations there are occurrences of divorce and remarriage, some scriptural and some unscriptural. Over the years good brethren have disagreed over various aspects of this subject:

- Who may marry and what constitutes a marriage?
- What exactly is a divorce and when does it occur?

Men of considerable influence and great ability in the Lord's kingdom have not always agreed on this subject. This is evident when listening to their preaching or reading from their articles. We sure are not surprised any more to know that people in a questionable marriage can usually find a preacher who will tell them what they want to hear (**cp. 2 Tim. 4:3-4**).

Brethren (elderships in particular) are many times forced to deal with seemingly unending situations that has them longing for Solomon's wisdom as they try their best to apply Biblical principles to unravel such tangled webs. Decisions people make regarding their marriages often brings about adultery (**Mt. 19:9**), and adultery is serious (**1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21**). The church's concern becomes one of fellowship and trying to be on the side of truth (**Eph. 5:11**) while maintaining the church's purity (**1 Cor. 5:6-7**).

This subject is extremely sensitive because we are dealing with life's *most* intimate relationship. It involves tender emotions and always affects more than one person. It is all too easy to be guided solely by sentiment and allow empathy to overshadow truth. Therefore, it is urgent that as disciples of the Lord Jesus, we know exactly what He has taught regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Our goal will be a 3-fold approach. If we stay committed to this goal and confine ourselves to what the Bible teaches, we will have a profitable study together.

# Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage

## Lesson 1

### 1) Marriage → Love Designed By God

The best, and obvious, place to start. More time needs to be spent on how to have a good marriage than on trying to figure out all the aspects of divorce & remarriage. We'll discuss who may actually marry as well as the principles the Bible sets forth that govern the contributions of both the husband and the wife.

### 2) Divorce → A Testament To Failure

Whenever a divorce occurs, someone has failed. It can be only 1 person or there could be (and often is) enough guilt to go around for both parties involved. Even though the Bible clearly presents God's feelings about divorce (**Mal. 2:16**), we also need to know what Jesus taught about putting a spouse away. Divorce is a Divinely allowed exception to the Biblical law of marriage.

### 3) Remarriage → An Option For Some...Not All

Remarriage is an available option, but not for everyone. Reviewing what Jesus taught tells us the seriousness of making sure that option is available to us. Even if we have the right to remarry, we must also understand the restrictions the Lord has placed on remarriage.

When engaging in a study like marriage, divorce, and remarriage (M/D/R), it is necessary when reviewing what the Bible does say to also consider the doctrines of men that have been invented for one reason or another. So many different doctrines exist that have done nothing to help people striving to know truth on this important topic. All these notions have done is confuse and lead people astray, and "...invalidate the word of God" (**Mt. 15:6**). Among the more prevalent ones are:

- Alien sinners not being accountable to the gospel's teaching on M/D/R  
*[some refer to this as the "Homer Hailey" doctrine]*
- One spouse unscripturally divorcing the other spouse and then either committing fornication or remarrying, only then to be subsequently put away by the previously divorced spouse  
*[some refer to this as the "Mental Divorce" doctrine]*
- Believers being able to remarry after an unbelieving spouse departs unscripturally  
*[some refer to this as the "Pauline exception" for divorce]*

It is imperative that when considering these and other similar doctrines that we do not just consider the doctrine itself. We must also be aware of the inevitable and logical conclusions those doctrines lead to. That is why error is so deadly...an erroneous position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage **never** leads one closer to God. It only leads to the bed of adultery. As we have already noted, impenitent adulterers will have no place in the kingdom of God.

We will not only limit our study to the New Testament. The Old Testament has several passages that reveal principles still relevant to the marriage, divorce, and remarriage issue today. Understanding those texts from the 1st covenant is vital to properly know what is taught in the 2nd covenant.

We pray for wisdom and patience to practice what we learn in these coming studies. "O Lord, increase our faith" was the desire of Jesus' disciples (**Lk. 17:5**). May that be our desire as well.