

Divorce

In Malachi 2:16 it says God hates divorce. For a long time the church read that and said, so if God hates divorce and you are divorced that means God hates you. We treated divorced people like they were the scum of the earth. For the rest of their lives we treated them as if they were living in sin. Even if we would let them into our church community we made sure they knew it was as a second-class citizen.

God's design for marriage is between a man and a woman for a lifetime. In His design sex was a gift for a husband and wife to share together within the context of marriage. The problem is we live in a fallen world. Imperfect people trying to follow a perfect design will mess it up even when they are trying not to.

God hates divorce. If you are divorced that doesn't mean God hates you. Marriage takes two people and makes them one. God did not design marriage to end so when it does it's painful. If you have been through that pain what you need to know is that God hates divorce because God loves you. He hates divorce because He never wanted you to experience that kind of pain.

Marriage and divorce are not to be taken lightly. Marriage is not a contract. Marriage is a covenant. Covenants do not have termination policies. A covenant is meant to be kept. Is divorce forgivable? Absolutely. That doesn't mean it's not a sin. Every divorce is a result of sin from one or both parties.

There are several possible Biblical grounds for divorce. Just because there are certain cases in which divorce is permissible does not mean God desires it. God's will, His highest and best for your life is that you be one with your spouse and you work through any sin or betrayal that came along. Divorce is not God's first choice. But here are the possible grounds where divorce becomes Biblically permissible:

1. Adultery. When a spouse breaks their wedding vows and engages in a sexual relationship outside the marriage can be grounds for divorce.
2. Abandonment. If you become a Christian after getting married and your spouse decides they don't want to be married to a Christian, let them go. They have abandoned the covenant. It should be noted that a Christian under no

circumstances should consider marrying a non-Christian. The Bible calls that being “unequally yoked” and tells us not to do it.

3. Unfaithfulness. The way Jesus expresses unfaithfulness in Matthew 5 could be used to include: sexual abuse within the marriage, drugs, imprisonment, occult practices, or other perversion. These are not explicit grounds for divorce but a case could be made for them.

Again these areas are not meant to be the first choice or the justification we use to give up on our covenant. Marriage is sacred. The big H of marriage is not happiness, it's holiness. What you will find is that when you fight for your marriage when it would be easier to give it up, your marriage gets stronger, better, and happier on the other side. Conflict isn't a result of a failing marriage. It's the opportunity to grow deeper in your marriage.

What we want to say to those of you who are married and struggling: stay with it. Keep fighting. Your marriage is worth it. It's worth fighting for. Don't treat divorce as an option. Otherwise you will want to take it. If you look at your marriage as a life commitment you will work harder not just to get through it but to make it better. Don't focus on yourself. Your goal in marriage should be to love your spouse, serve your spouse, and bless your spouse even if they don't do the same in return. When you love them selflessly, what you will often find is that over time, they will start loving you back the same way.

To those of you who are divorced what we want to say to you is this: we are sorry. We are sorry for how the church has treated you. We are sorry for the pain you have endured. We are sorry for the things that have been said and for things that have been done in the church and by the church. You are not a second-class citizen in the eyes of God. He loves you. You are His child and being divorced doesn't change that. We want you to know that we love you. You are welcome here.

Religious people will look at you and see a blotch on your record that can be removed. God looks at you and sees His child whom He loves. He sees you and says: “Yea, I can use them.”

VERSES TO USE AT THE END

Genesis 2:24

Matt 5:32

Matt 19:6-9

Matt 26:28

Luke 6:18

Lukr 11:4

Ephesians 3:32

1 Corinthians 16:12-13

1 Corinthians 7

Malachi 2:16