



Position Paper

Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

Hope & Healing for Marriage: Divorce & Remarriage Issues

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Introduction

There is a wholly wrong view of marriage in our society today, and it has slowly crept into the church as well. Marriage is not an institution of man. It originated with God and was approved by our Lord Jesus. A proper vision for marriage consists primarily of two things: Covenant and Consummation. The Covenant is the leaving and cleaving aspect found in Genesis 2:24, which is a commitment made before God. The Consummation is the becoming one flesh principle also found in Gen 2:24. There is a third key aspect to healthy biblical marriage and that is community. The pattern set out in the scriptures is covenant and consummation in the midst of healthy community. The healthy community ideally should be made up of a family, faith friends and a healthy church community. It takes a proper view of all these things to have a right view of marriage.

How we define faith, love and marriage directly determines the success of our marriages. In our world today, sadly 50 out 100 marriages don't make it, and this statistic is getting worse. However, in marriages where the couple is committed to God, to the church, and to praying and studying the Bible together, the failure rate is drastically reduced.

Many today are giving up hope on marriage, but deep inside everyone knows there is something sacred about marriage and the universal desire to experience it. There is hope for marriage ultimately because it is not a human institution, but it is God's design and plan to build His eternal family.

We cannot have a healthy church without healthy marriages, and we cannot have healthy marriages without a healthy church. There is healing for marriage because Jesus' death and resurrection have provided the way to heal the broken-hearted and transform the hard-hearted.

It is only through an intimate relationship with Jesus that we are able to:
"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave us."
(Ephesians 4:32)

Vision for Biblical Marriage:

There are no perfect marriages, but we have a perfect Lord and Savior who has come to redeem us and empower us so we can experience salvation and the restoration of broken relationships and marriages into something beautiful. Marriage is to be a picture of the intimacy and communion we have in our relationship with God. It is the source of the life giving blessing of children which are a gift from God. It is the beautiful process of a man and women learning to die to self and serve and love each other as Christ has served us.

However, we live in a fallen world where selfishness and hardness of heart have caused great harm. And so, because of those things the result is often divorce.

Listed below is a basic outline of what the Bible teaches about divorce and remarriage:

We must maintain a proper view of God's Original Design:

1. God's original design was that there should be no divorce and therefore no remarriage "What therefore God has joined together let not man separate." (Gen.2:22-25, Mal. 2:16, Matt 19:4-6, Mk 10:5-9, Lk 16:18, Rm 7:1-3)
2. If a wife divorces her husband she should remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband, and her husband should not divorce his wife but if so should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her. (1Cor 7:10-11)
3. We are not to be unequally yoked. Believers are to marry believers, only those in the Lord. (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Cor. 7:39)

We must maintain a proper view of the exceptions:

1. If a man divorces his wife and she remarries, her original husband can never remarry her even if she is divorced or her second husband dies. (Deut. 24:2-4)
2. If a man divorces his wife except for sexual immorality he causes her to commit adultery for whoever marries her will commit adultery unless her marriage was broken by immorality. (Matt 5:31-32)
3. If a man divorces his wife and marries another woman he is committing adultery unless his original wife had committed adultery. (Matt 19:9)
4. If a woman divorces her husband and marries another man she is committing adultery unless her original husband committed immorality. (Mark 10:12)
5. If a married woman separates from her husband, she is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And the husband should not divorce his wife."

(1 Cor. 7:10-11)

6. If a husband and wife are a believer and unbeliever the believer should not divorce the unbeliever but if the unbeliever wants to divorce then it is allowed. (1 Cor 7:12-16)

7. When the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, Jesus' answer was that Moses allowed it because of their hardness of heart. Jesus makes clear that it is a hard heart that breaks up marriage. So, when it comes to remarriage, if God allowed divorce in the O.T, He most likely allowed for remarriage. This can best be seen in Deut. 24:1-2. In the gospel passages it is assuming remarriage occurs after divorce. (Matthew 19:1-9, Mark 10:1-12)

How do we apply these biblical principles:

We need to remember that divorce is forgivable and that God is a gracious, loving, and forgiving God. However, divorce has many dire consequences that will affect the whole family and any future remarriage; therefore, it should not be taken lightly. God's Word gives clear direction in most of these areas. Because of the nature of divorce and the very painful circumstances surrounding each specific relationship, great care and grace need to be applied in dealing with relationships where it has occurred.

Again, we cannot have a healthy church without healthy marriages, and we cannot have healthy marriages without a healthy church. God's path for the healthy growth of our marriages is being a part of a healthy church community where there is mutual encouragement for each marriage and family.