

What is Divorce and Does God Allow It?

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I. Introduction

In a day and age when marriage is treated like the proverbial car we can turn in for next year's model, it's crucial to understand what God's truth says about marriage and what divorce does to it. Marriage is God permanently uniting two lives together. Since God never intended for divorce to be part of marriage, He hates it. Though He allows it, He prefers that we fight tooth and nail to keep the unity that He created.

II. If Marriage is "One Flesh," What Does Divorce Do?

Divorce has become part of the culture and it's no longer shameful. We have *no-fault* divorce, which means that you can divorce for no reason. Then there's annulment, which makes it as if the marriage never happened, something Britney Spears utilized after her 55-hour marriage. Is this what divorce is, an eraser? How does God see divorce?

Genesis 1:26–28, Adam and Eve were given two mandates that require both participants: procreation and dominion over all the earth. If Adam and Eve divorced, not only would dominion over the earth fail, there would be no human race. Thus, divorce was never part of God's plan.

Since divorce is not part of God's original plan, when man engages in it (whether biblical or unbiblical), everyone involved will be adversely affected: the husband, wife, and children (if any). A marriage requires both parties in order to fulfill God's two mandates. Without each party involved, the jobs get much harder or impossible. And if there are children involved, then they will suffer loss too because a child needs the respective male and female love, discipline, and instruction that the mother and father will provide.

Genesis 2:18–24, when God created man he was the pinnacle of creation because of his uniqueness: man was made in God's image; he thinks, feels, and loves in a manner similar to God. But after making man male and female, God united them into "one flesh," thus mimicking the oneness that exists in the Trinity. In marriage man reflects the Trinity. To God a married couple is one entity; they are literally "one flesh." If this is what marriage is, what is divorce? It's the tearing of flesh and it will affect everyone involved.

III. Did God Divorce His Wife?

Hosea 2, God instructed the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute, which would serve as a mirror image for God's relationship with His wife Israel. Hosea's wife commits adultery, but God instructs him to redeem her, Hosea 3, which is exactly what God does with Israel. Though she committed terrible acts of adultery (idolatry with other gods) 2:1–13, God redeemed her, 2:14–23. This story teaches us that we should avoid divorce at all costs, even in the face adultery. (Jeremiah 3:8: one might think that God did divorce His wife. But even though He gave her a certificate of divorce, in the end He redeemed her, Jeremiah 3:14–18)

IV. What Does God Think of Divorce?

Malachi 2:10–16, God sent the prophet Malachi to address several sins in Israel; among them were infidelity, mixed marriages, divorce, and false worship. God doesn't have a problem with intermarriage: Jews were allowed to intermarry, but not with pagan Canaanites who were cursed to die, Deut. 7:1–3; 21:10–14. The reason God was angry with Israel concerning mixed marriages was because Israeli men were illegally divorcing their Jewish wives in order to marry pagan Gentile women. They were breaking their "one flesh" marriage covenant. God called it treacherous behavior and states outright that He hates divorce because "it covers one's garment with violence," Malachi 2:16—it tears the "one flesh" apart.

V. God Hates Divorce, But Does He Allow It?

Matthew 19:1–9, man may pass laws concerning marriage, but marriage is God's institution. He's the one who unites husbands and wives, Matthew 19:6. And when He joins them, they are "one flesh." However, because of the hardness of man's heart, God allowed divorce—but this was never part of His plan. He allows it for one reason: sexual immorality. If a man divorces for another reason he may be divorced in man's eyes, but not in God's. So, is God OK with divorce? No, He would prefer we reconcile, even when adultery is involved.

VI. Is Desertion a Legitimate Reason for Divorce?

1 Corinthians 7:10–16, when a Christian is married to a non-Christian, if the non-Christian is willing to stay in the marriage, then the Christian cannot divorce, 7:12–13. However, if the non-Christian refuses to stay in the marriage, then the Christian has permission to divorce, 7:15. This may also apply to marriages involving two Christians because deserting your spouse is de facto divorce. Thus, the spouse left behind would merely be filing divorce papers to a marriage that's already been dissolved. But in either case, one must ask, "What was the reason for desertion and did both parties fulfill their self-sacrifice command?" (Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:12 does not mean that this is simply Paul's opinion. The Holy Spirit inspired it and preserved it in Scripture.)

We just grew apart, so we divorced. Why does this happen? You are "one flesh" you cannot grow apart. But it does happen, so what has gone wrong? A failure to be one: one or both have failed to love sacrificially and share their intimacy wholeheartedly with each other, i.e., to open the door of their soul.

VII. Conclusion

God allows us to divorce, but this is the last thing He wants. Why? Because He intended that we remain together "until death do us part." But what if she disrespects me? Forgive her and reconcile. But what if he abuses me? Forgive him and reconcile. But what if they do the unthinkable? Forgive them and reconcile. Both of you must be willing to die for each other... always. Otherwise, you will grow apart and end up in divorce.