

Marriage and Divorce

This teaching is the second of 2 Parts - review Part I on [Sacred Marriage](#), from last week, on website – [harpethcc.com](#).

1. We Live in a Divorce-Culture where Divorce and Living Together without Marriage are Common.

Different Views on the Grounds for Divorce:

- A. **Non-Christian and Mainstream Church View** – divorce for many reasons, including irreconcilable difference.
- B. **Roman Catholic View** – divorce and remarriage are not allowed for any grounds. The only ground is a special process that annuls marriage – says it never happened. Many Roman Catholics simply ignore the church’s teachings.
- C. **Proposed New Evangelical Christian View** - David Instone-Brewer (*Christianity Today, 2007*) has recently promoted a view which increases the grounds for divorce by saying that **emotional neglect** by your spouse is grounds for divorce. He says that Exodus 21: 10 (description of expectations for taking on additional wives) was assumed as additional grounds for divorce by Jesus and the New Testament – and it allows divorce for neglect of emotional support and honoring your spouse (neglect of *marital rights*). If true, Jesus would be allowing divorce and remarriage to just about anyone.

John Piper expressed concern: “Here, at last, is a scholar who tells me that not only adultery, but neglect of honoring me is enough ... That just about releases all of us from our marriage covenants and puts an end to all church discipline.” All spouses have dishonored or emotionally neglected their mate at some point.

2. At HCC, we believe in God’s forgiveness for past non-Biblical Divorces and Remarriages ... But Jesus calls us to a higher level, to obey him in the present and future.

3. HCC’s View on Divorce and Remarriage is the Traditional Protestant and Evangelical View – Divorce and Remarriage is allowed only for Adultery or Desertion by Non-Believer.

- A. **Jewish View at the Time of Jesus** - In the first century, there were two views on divorce: Rabbi Hillel said divorce was OK for almost any reason (including burning the toast) and Rabbi Shammai who said that divorce was necessary for adultery.
- B. **Jesus’ View** –

Matthew 19:3-10 -- **3** And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “**Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?**” **4** He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5** and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? **6** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” **7** They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” **8** He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. **9** **And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.**” **10** The disciples said to him, “**If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.**”

i. Jesus said that divorce and remarriage is permissible, but only on grounds of sexual immorality (*porneia* is a word for sexual misbehavior in Greek).

ii. The reaction of the disciples – “it is better not to marry” - shows that Jesus meant that marriage is permanent and divorce and remarriage is permissible only for sexual immorality.

- C. **The apostle Paul applied Jesus’ teaching to when a Non-Believer deserts the Believer.**

1 Corinthians 7:10-15 -- To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. ¹²To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her

believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵**But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances;** God has called us to live in peace.

i. The words “not bound” are the words expected for release of a marriage in Jewish culture.

ii. When an unbeliever leaves, he will likely end up sexual involved with someone else – so the believer is not bound to this marriage (if this is so, it is similar in principle to the reason given in Matthew 19:9).

4. If Divorce and Remarriage are only for sexual immorality and desertion (by a non-believer) what about Abuse?

Sexual abuse is covered by the word Jesus used for sexual immorality – *porneia* – and is grounds for divorce. The New Testament does not state that physical abuse, by itself, is grounds for divorce. But abuse often involves other things, including sexual misconduct. Let’s be clear, abuse, in its various forms, is terrible sin which necessitates intervention and protection (often legally too). The HCC elders believe that we have a responsibility to protect and watch over those who are under their care (members), so we will treat such matters with utmost seriousness. We believe in the following:

i. Abuse necessitates intervention, protection, prayer and special support.

ii. Godly men must go out of their way to protect women and children from abuse.

iii. With the counsel of the elders, divorce may be necessary to provide protection in cases of abuse. These situations are rare in a church and usually require special care and guidance from godly church leaders.

5. At HCC, We Must Look to God (through Prayer) and Work Hard to Help Each Other Stay Married.

Every Christ-follower . . .

- A. We actively seek God’s ways and view of marriage to be faithful to Him.
- B. We actively love our spouses by taking classes, listening to teachings, and reading material to help our marriage.

Every Christ-follower who experiences Marriage Difficulties . . .

- A. We will seek the prayers and wisdom of the elders & their wives whenever marriage troubles arise.
 - i. The elders provide regular **Marriage Study Small Groups and Marriage Seminars**.
 - ii. The elders are developing **marriage coaching** by fellow church members for marriage difficulties.
- B. We will seek help with in-depth Christian counseling if there are ongoing or severe problems in our marriage.
 - i. The elders support **Celebrate Recovery** for those with Addictions – or married to those with them.
 - ii. The elders support the Marriage Crisis Seminar “**LovePath 911**” for marriages in distress.
 - iii. The elders utilize **Bible-based Christian Marriage counselors** for in-depth marriage problems.

Recommended Resources

