



## MOSAIC CHURCH OF CENTRAL ARKANSAS

### ON DIVORCE

*The following notes are from a message preached by Mark DeYmaz  
at Mosaic on Sunday, January 23, 2011.*

#### **Divorce**

*I Corinthians 7:10, 11 ff.*

A. To Christians spouses in otherwise good standing with the Lord and one another, (i.e., not cheating on or abusing one another, etc.), Paul makes clear the command of God: **no divorce**. However he goes on to say that ...

1) If such people do get divorced (again, speaking to Christians otherwise walking w/ God), there are only two options available to them:

a) They are to remain single; or

b) Be reconciled if at all possible to the former spouse.

2) To the rest (i.e., believers who are unequally yoked in marriage with non-believers) and again, from Paul's own experience, he suggests that these believers stay together with their consenting, unbelieving, spouses in order to reflect the unconditional love of God in every way, so as (possibly) to win the unbelieving spouse, as well as their children, to the Lord.

3) Having said this, and based on my own experience in life and ministry, I will say that sometimes, even for those intending as best they can to follow the Lord's command in this regard, remaining married is not always possible.

*Which brings us to the question ...*

B. Are there other viable options for divorce and/or later remarriage defined by Scripture? Yes, there are ...

1) Infidelity, as Christ himself describes in Matthew 5:31, 32;

2) Hardness of heart as was allowed by Moses (Christ comments, Matthew 19:18);

3) And of course, in death (vs 39), Paul writes that a wife is bound to her husband by law as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she will, only [provided that he too is] in the Lord.

4) But there is something else, too, that must be discussed, something that is not often understood or explained adequately in our desire as Christians to promote the sanctity of marriage and discourage divorce.

C. Notice in vs. 15, Paul counsels a believing spouse to let an unbelieving spouse leave if that one desires to divorce; the believing spouse, at that point is not morally bound to

remain unmarried. To say it another way, the faithful believer who is divorced by an unbelieving spouse is free to remarry after divorce.

1) Now stay with me ...

2) Because in what I'm about to say, I do not in anyway mean to encourage divorce;

3) Nor do I intend to somehow rewrite Christian understanding of the sacredness of marriage.

4) Nevertheless, I believe the phrase *unbelieving spouse* does not simply refer to one who is not a Christian in the traditional sense, but also to a Christian who is no longer faithfully keeping God's commandments and consequently affecting his own life and marriage in a negative way; to one who may in fact be saved, but who's heart has been changed or hardened by sin, incorrect thinking, or perhaps who has been overtaken by the grief, pain and regrets of his/her past so that they no longer walk in fellowship with Christ, oneness with their spouse or the church; to one who repeatedly sins and is unwilling to repent; to one who shows no remorse for destructive actions and tendencies; to one who has violated the covenant of his or her marriage vows in any variety of other significant ways, etc.

a) In other words, I believe the phrase *unbelieving spouse* is synonymous with a spouse who is "no longer faithful to God or to their spouse;" that is ...

b) A spouse who has willfully forsaken morality in selfishness or for the pleasures of this world, etc. – such as ...

c) One who subjects a spouse (or children) to repeated verbal or physical abuse, pornography, adultery, abandonment, etc.

d) For more re. Paul's heart and thinking concerning his use of the term "unbelieving spouse," see I Timothy 5:8.

For as Paul makes clear in vs. 17, and speaking to Christians (which would include a Christian who is no longer acting faithfully before the Lord or a spouse),

*Vs 17 - Only, let each one [seek to conduct himself and regulate his affairs so as to] lead the life which the Lord has allotted and imparted to him and to which God has invited and summoned him. This is my order in all the churches.*

He then goes on to explain that words mean nothing; only actions do!

*Vs 18 - Was anyone at the time of his summons [from God] already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the evidence of circumcision. Was anyone at the time [God] called him uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. (19) For circumcision is nothing and counts for nothing, neither does uncircumcision, **but [what counts is] keeping the commandments of God.***

In my opinion, then, and based on my understanding of who God is, the study of His word, and my own experience in life and ministry, if one spouse abandons their commitment to the marriage covenant (a legal, spiritual, contract into which they once entered with another before the Lord via spoken vows), the other spouse should not be expected to remain in the marriage merely for the sake of outward, pharisaic, appearances, or to carry the burden for such a situation beyond what they are able to bear; whereby they are seemingly punished or unduly suffer for the unfaithfulness of their spouse.

And in such instances, if or when divorce does indeed occur, I do not believe the violated spouse is restricted from ever marrying again.

*As we all know ...*

1. Divorce comes at great pain and cost: not only to those involved, but to all those affected including immediate family, personal friends, and the church/name of Jesus Christ.
2. Therefore the decision to divorce must remain entirely a personal, private, one; for in the end, it is the one who divorces who alone will spend the rest of his or her life living with the consequences.
3. In other words, no one on earth has the right or spiritual authority to grant you the freedom or permission to divorce; likewise, no one on earth has the right or spiritual authority to insist that you remain in an unfaithful, threatening, irresponsible or otherwise destructive marital relationship such as I've described above.
4. That said, I strongly believe that divorce is to be a rare exception, and not a rule or norm, among believers, and understood only as a last resort in the most difficult of circumstances.
5. Divorce, then, should be pursued only after every avenue of godly counsel has been sought over a significant period of time. This counsel should include wise confidants such as certain family and/or friends, as well as local church leadership; and again, only after considerable time in prayer, personal reflection, Bible study, and one's hope has been exhausted.
6. Likewise, the decision to remain celibate or to marry must not be taken lightly. It, too, like marriage, is a gift and calling.
7. In the end, as this passage instructs, our focus must be on doing whatever will help us serve the Lord best – whether in singleness, celibacy or marriage and, yes, even after divorce.