





No Difference between Christian and Non?



- The overall divorce rate for all married couples is 42%
- Americans who attend religious services several times a month were about 35 percent less likely to divorce than those with no religious affiliation – The Marriage Project
- Six in 10 who never attend church have been divorced vs. 38% of weekly attendees – study by Bradley Wright, sociologist
- "The divorce rates of Christian believers are not identical to the general population—not even close. Being a committed, faithful believer makes a measurable difference in marriage." – Brad Wilcox, The Marriage Project

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The Old Testament on Marriage



"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)

"Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." (Genesis 2:18-25)

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The Curse on Marriage



To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth. In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." (Genesis 3:16)

- The above does not refer to a genuine love and desire for the woman and a benevolent protector for the wife
- Women would continue to try and lead the man and usurp his position; the Hebrew root means "seek control". "Desire" is the same word used to speak of sin ruling over Cain: "sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you" (Gen. 4:7). Only other time the phrase is repeated in the Pentateuch
- Men would now rule in an unbalanced and un-proper way
- The harmony of Genesis 1 and 2 is now disrupted

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The Restoration of Marriage



"Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:21-25)

- In Christ, the curse is removed
- The wife ceases her agenda of trying to control her husband
- The husband ceases his agenda of a hard-line rule over his wife
- The harmony of Genesis 1 and 2 is restored

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Adultery in the Old Testament



"If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." (Leviticus 20:10)

Obviously if you have a death, you have the end to a marriage...

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The Old Testament on Divorce



"This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." (Malachi 2:13-16)

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Divorce for the Pharisees



- The Pharisees were known for constantly divorcing their wives and teaching a man could divorce his wife for most any reason at all
- They followed the instruction of a famous Rabbi named Hillel who taught a man could divorce his wife for burning his dinner, putting too much salt on his food, speaking to another man, if she was infertile or couldn't produce a male child, or if someone saw her knees

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Divorce for the Pharisees



- The Twelve Tables of Roman law gave the man the sole power to divorce his wife for any reason at all and the Jewish leaders followed suit
- The Scribes took the following verse: "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house" (Deuteronomy 24:1), and broke apart the phrase "some indecency". Their interpretation became you could divorce for "indecency", which meant adultery/immorality OR for a "some", which is "cause". This, they said, meant you could divorce for really any "cause" - it became "any cause" divorce. Clearly this is not the correct interpretation of the passage.

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Divorce for the Pharisees



"Among those who will never behold the face of hell is he who has had a bad wife, such a man is saved from hell because he's expiated his sins on earth."

"A bad wife is like leprosy to her husband. What is the remedy? Let him divorce her and be cured of his leprosy."

"If a man has a bad wife, it is a religious duty to divorce her."

- Rabbinic excerpts from various Talmudic writings

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Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

"When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there. Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.

"For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it." (Matthew 19:1-12)

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A Plot Against Jesus



"When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there. Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" (Matthew 19:1-3)

This was the territory under the control of Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded. Why did he murder John? Because John called him out on his adulterous, incestuous marriage. The Pharisees knew what Jesus had taught on the subject of adultery from His sermon on the Mount: "It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32). So the Pharisee's plan was to (1) Get Jesus to speak against the prevailing Rabbinic 'tradition', and (2) see if they could get Jesus to speak against divorce and against practices like Herod's in the hopes that Herod would kill Him too.

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Jesus Evades Their Trap



"And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:4-6)

- Jesus does not give his 'opinion' on the matter, but rather takes them back to God's Word – the Standard that they have to acknowledge and submit to
- He both overrules their own traditional (and flawed) teachings on divorce and avoids being implicated in speaking against Herod.
- His opening line "Have you not read..." is somewhat sarcastic in that the Pharisees prided themselves in reading and interpreting the Old Testament.

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Four Reasons Not to Divorce

"And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:4-6)

1. One man was created for one woman – marriage was not designed to have 'spare' partners waiting
2. There is a strong bond that occurs – "cleave" denotes a bond that cannot be broken. The Hebrew word for marriage – "Kiddushin" – means to become a personal possession and a surrender to the other person and to God
3. The two have become one – one entity that is represented in their offspring. You cannot divide one into anything whole
4. God has joined them together – no person should undo the work of God



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The Pharisee's Objection

objection!

"They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" (Matthew 19:7)

- The Pharisees try to support their no-cause divorce stance by appealing to the Bible and Moses (Deut. 24)
- However, as we've seen, the Scribes had broken apart one phrase to mean two different things so they could divorce for literally any reason
- Jesus is going to now correct their flawed interpretation

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The Exception for Divorce

"He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:8-9)

RULE >
EXCEPTION

- Jesus first points out that the commentary by Moses in Deuteronomy 24 is more of a set of rules for dealing with the existing behavior of the Jews and was not condoning divorce at all
- From the beginning, God designed marriage to be lifelong

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The Exception for Divorce

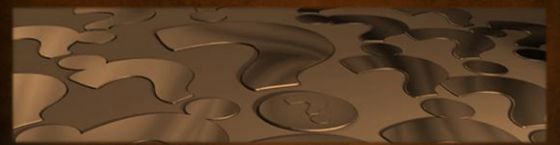
"And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also." (Jeremiah 3:8)



The Old Testament verses that speak about Israel's continued faithfulness seems to point that what Jesus referred to was a consistent, unrepentant behavior.

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But I thought God Hates Divorce...?



"For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 2:16)

"I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9)

- God does hate divorce. But there is evidently something He hates **more**... And because He hates unfaithfulness more than the act of divorce, He permits it to protect the innocent party. The adulterer is guilty; the offended party is not and therefore should not be punished with loneliness, misery, etc.

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The Disciples Reaction

"The disciples said to Him, "if the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." (Matthew 19:10)

- Evidently the disciples had been indoctrinated into the first century's very permissive divorce lifestyle, so they overreact. But they got the message!
- They are right in that you should not enter into marriage flippantly; you want to ensure you are marrying the one God intends for you
- Jesus tells them in essence "good luck with not marrying" because the only ones in life that can handle that are the ones God intends for it
- "He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the Lord." (Proverbs 18:22)
- "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord." (Proverbs 19:14)



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But What About Other Situations?



- Jesus' teaching covered what God considers to be the ideal for marriage and the one key exception for divorce
- But what about other situations?
- What about Christians who have married unbelievers, marriages/divorce prior to a person becoming a Christian, etc.?

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Paul's Teaching on Marriage/Divorce

- In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, we have what many believe is Paul's commentary on Jesus' marriage/divorce teaching
- He addresses a number of different situations that Jesus does not
- Marked out by him saying, "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:10) and "But to the rest I say, not the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:12)
- Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit, so his words carry the same weight as Jesus' – it is all the Word of God



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The Corinthians Situation – Much Like Today



- The word "Corinthianize" in the Greek means to commit sexual sin
- Corinth was bathed in sexual immorality and chaos where marriage was concerned
- Slaves were mated by their masters by "tent companionship", which involved literal breeding operations, but the situation was very much a live-in/love-in approach
- Widespread divorce, living together, and other type things in Corinth
- Romans were sometimes married under what was called "Usus", which was common law marriage. If you lived with a woman for a year, you were considered married; led to much "living together" experimentation

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The Roman Marriage Machine



- Under Roman law, you could also buy a wife from the father. Done all the time for financial purposes
- The Roman "confarreatio" marriage is what we model our marriage ceremonies after
- The exchanging of the rings because one of the supposed Roman wise men taught that there's a nerve running from that finger to the heart
- They worshipped and said prayers to Jupiter and Juno
- They had a cake, wore veils, played music, had wreaths, etc. All of that filtered down into the Catholic church and Protestantism
- Divorce was rampant; some historical documents show people getting married for the 27th time

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“Now concerning the things about which you wrote...”

- With all this sexual and marital chaos occurring in Corinth, the believers there who had come out of all that were confused over what they should do
- Paul’s letter to them, in part, had to try and “unscramble the omelet” that had been made by the people there
- He doesn’t give us all these questions or statements except perhaps one, but instead gives his responses
- He covers questions about single people, married people, people married to believers, people married to unbelievers, people who are already divorced and now are single, do they have a right to remarry? People who are virgins, fathers with daughters that are virgins, should they give them in marriage or not? People whose husbands or wives have died, should they remarry or not?



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Jesus’ Teaching with Paul’s Additions

Jesus’ Teaching
In Matthew 19

“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

Paul’s Teaching
that addresses
the Corinthian’s
questions

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.” (1 Corinthians 7:10–13)

Paul is telling the Corinthians not to divorce their non-Christian spouses, which very possibly could have been erroneously taught in the little Corinthian church.

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Abandonment



“Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.” (1 Corinthians 7:15)

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The Westminster Confession on Divorce



V. Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.

VI. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God has joined together in marriage: yet, nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church, or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case.

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Another (Obvious) Way to Remarry



"Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man." (Romans 7:1-3)

"A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39)

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What about being divorced & then being saved?

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

From this verse, it is possible to implicitly understand that divorce falls under "old things" that have "passed away".



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What about being divorced & then being saved?

"And so, when a person becomes a Christian, I think there's a new day, a dawning of a new day. I think there's something brand new that happens and the grace of Jesus Christ that saves the soul and sentence the body to a lifetime of utter frustration and anxiety. There's no point in that. ... Let's say I had married twice back then and I got divorces and even I was guilty adulterer, or there was no adultery, the divorces had nothing to do with what...we didn't even think of God's law, it was just our former life style. Now I'm single, or now I'm widowed, do I have a right to remarry? And what does he say in verse 8? "It's good if you stay the way I am." And he's right back to that same deal again, stay single if you can.

"But if they (both groups) cannot have self-control, let them... what? ... marry." Now this is God's provision for those people now single who were formerly married prior to their conversion. That's the only interpretation that makes any sense out of the passage."

- John MacArthur
Commenting on 1 Cor. 7:1-10



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Summing up Paul's Commentary on Divorce

- Is sex wrong?
- No, God created sex to be shared between a husband and a wife.
- Should those saved after being divorced or widowed remarry?
- Yes, unless God has wired them for being single and serving God that way.
- Should salvation change your marital status?
- No. If you're married to a non-Christian, stay married.
- What is my unbelieving spouse leaves me?
- You are free to remarry, but only another Christian

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Conclusions



- God hates divorce
- God hates unfaithfulness more and so He provides a release from marriage when a spouse proves to be unfaithful
- Christians who are married to non-Christians are not to seek divorce
- If a Christian is abandoned, they are able to remarry
- If a Christian loses a spouse, they can remarry
- If a non-believer has been divorced and becomes a Christian, they may remarry, but only marry another Christian

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