
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Does 1 Cor 7 grant permission for divorce?**

First, let's look at the passage in question:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

¹⁰ Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

Many Christians believe that permission is here being granted for married couples to divorce for any reason whatsoever provided they do not remarry while their former partner is still living. This also leads to three other assumptions:

- 1) It is assumed that when a couple divorces for trivial causes they are really "*still married in the eyes of God.*"
- 2) It is assumed that when one of the divorced partners dies, the surviving partner is free to remarry.
- 3) It is also assumed that when one of the divorced partners remarries or commits fornication, the other partner (who is still alive) is now free to remarry whomever they wish.

Let us take each assumption one at a time.

Is Divorce Granted In 1 Cor 7:10-11?

First: Is divorce being granted in 1 Cor 7:10-11?

The answer is: **Absolutely not.** Read the passage again:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

¹⁰ Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

¹¹ ... And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

These are commands – not suggestions. Any wife who divorces her husband for a trivial cause is sinning and will face God in judgment. Any husband who divorces his wife for a trivial cause is sinning and will also face God in judgment. Why? Because marriage was designed to prevent loneliness (Gen 2:18-25) and to prevent fornication (1 Cor 7:1-5). By divorcing on trivial grounds, temptation for a sexual partner becomes a tremendous temptation. Jesus said this:

Matthew 5:32

³² But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality **causes her** to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

When a married man cheats on his wife, he makes himself an adulterer. But when a wife divorces an innocent husband, she causes him to commit adultery, because in his loneliness and because of sexual desires, he will seek out another partner. The wife who divorced the innocent husband is the cause of his unfaithfulness when this happens. The wife will answer in judgment before God. The same is true if a husband divorces an innocent wife and she becomes tempted to seek another partner.

Simply put: 1 Cor 7:10 plainly states a wife is not to divorce her husband on trivial grounds and verse 11 says the same thing to the husband.

What About Verse 11?

Q: What about verse 11? Doesn't this imply that divorce is permissible as long as remarriage does not occur?

The answer is: **Absolutely not.** Verse 11 is merely teaching a Christian how to correct the sin if they end up violating the first command. Observe carefully:

1 Corinthians 7:11

¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. ...

If a Christian woman does not follow the instructions given in verse 10, she has sinned – we've already noticed that. If, in violation of verse 10, the wife divorces anyway, in order to receive forgiveness, she must be reconciled to her former husband. This is a command. If it is impossible to be reconciled, she must remain unmarried for the remainder of her life.

Q: What would prevent the woman from being reconciled?

A: Her husband may have died and therefore, it is impossible to be reconciled now. Or, her husband may have remarried someone else and it is impossible to be reconciled now.

In cases where it is impossible to be reconciled, the woman must remain single for the remainder of her life.

Q: Isn't the woman still married "*in the eyes of God*" when she divorces her husband? And if she's still married "*in the eyes of God*," then when he dies, wouldn't she be free to marry someone else?

A: Absolutely not. The wife is not "*still married in the eyes of God*" when she divorces her husband. Read the passage again:

1 Corinthians 7:11

¹¹ But even if she does depart, **let her remain unmarried** or be reconciled ...

A woman cannot "*remain unmarried*" if she's "*still married in the eyes of God*." When a divorce occurs, the woman is unmarried. She must now be reconciled to her former husband if possible and if reconciliation is impossible, she must remain unmarried for the remainder of her life.

Why?

Q: Why is divorce for trivial causes forbidden?

There are three reasons:

- First, when a couple marries, they make vows before God that they will stay faithfully married to their spouse "*until death do us part.*" Vows are permanent and binding (Ecc 5:2-6; Mt 5:37).
- Second, divorcing a partner causes that partner to become tempted and the one divorcing is the cause of the resulting sexual sin (Mt 5:32).
- Third, divorcing a partner causes one's self to become tempted for companionship and for sexual fulfillment and people divorcing innocent spouses find they have put themselves in a tempting position.

In summary: I did not make the rules for divorce – Jesus did that. My job as a preacher of the gospel is to simply teach and report what the Lord taught.

- Our young people need pre-marital counseling before they make binding vows which will forever affect their lives.
- Our married couples need to be taught the requirements they placed themselves under by taking vows and becoming married in the first place.

If you don't like the conclusions of this short study, go shopping for another preacher who will surely give you permission to do as you please. Just remember that on judgment day, the word of God will read then just like it does now – in spite of a preacher giving you permission to do otherwise.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

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