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# Faith News



Spirit of Faith International

April/May 2021



**WHAT ABOUT  
~~DIVORCE?~~**



In association with  
Spirit of Faith International, USA  
a.k.a. John Roughton Ministries Inc.

## WEDNESDAY

Pastor's Bible Study 5:00 pm



## SUNDAY

Worship & the Word	10:00 am
Prayer & Praise	5:00 pm*
Covenant Kids	10:00 am
Nagamese Service	2:00 pm

\* As announced



## SATURDAY

Corporate prayer	6:30 am
RGenX (Teens/Young adults)	4:00 pm

# WHAT ABOUT DIVORCE?



**John Roughton**

What should be our attitude towards divorce? Is it a sin to divorce? Should a Christian who gets a divorce be expelled from the church? Is divorce ever justified? Can the divorced remarry?

Globally, divorce has risen by 251.8% since 1960. What was once rare has become commonplace. Some countries have a declining divorce rate, but the number of people getting married has also dropped significantly, with many couples choosing rather to cohabitate.

So what does the Word of God say on this subject?

**Malachi 2:16 (NKJV)**  
**For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce.**

Please note that God didn't say that he hates the divorcee —because he doesn't. But he hates divorce itself. I'm not sure if there are ever any winners in a divorce. Many individuals, when they experience difficulties in their marriage, think that divorce is a simple solution to all their problems. But divorce is rarely,

if ever, painless. And the effects of divorce are far-reaching.

Divorce not only ends a marriage, it pulls apart families.

**v.15 (CEV) Didn't God create you to become like one person with your wife? And why did he do this? It was so you would have children, and then lead them to become God's people.**

God intended for marriage to be a lifelong commitment, not a temporary arrangement. That's why no one should carelessly consider marriage. Never allow anyone, family or friends or society, to pressure you into marriage.

You can quit school and quit your job. But quitting your marriage is no simple matter. Divorce has ramifications socially, legally, and most of all, spiritually. So don't ever get married thinking, "If it doesn't work out, I'll leave him/her." Marriage doesn't work without commitment.

It is better to remain single your whole life than to be in a bad marriage.

**John Wesley** was a powerful man of God, whose life and ministry changed the course of history. But he married the wrong woman. The relationship was stormy from the beginning. A visitor to his home reported seeing John Wesley being dragged across the room by a handful of hair, held by his wife. Wesley meticulously kept a journal, and yet strangely only mentioned his wife in one entry — and that, when she left him:

*Finally, she left for good. I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her.*

I would encourage anyone contemplating marriage to wait on the Lord, make sure you're led by the Holy Spirit and not your feelings or flesh. There are no perfect people and no

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perfect marriages. But don't settle for less than God's best for you.

I like something Keith Moore said, "If it's not quite right — it's not right."

One reason God instituted marriage is to create a family environment where

children can be raised and nurtured to live for him. I don't think most men get married because they want to have children. For many, children are an afterthought. They are motivated by physical attraction and romance. But of course, that's how children are born! In other words, some men are ready for sex, but not for fatherhood.

God's perfect will is for every child to have a mother and a father. I understand that is not always the case. God can give you grace. He is a father to the fatherless (**Psalm 68:5**). But God's best is for children to have a two-parent home.

Children often suffer the most in a divorce, even in an amicable break-up. Young children often blame themselves for their parents' separation. Children from a broken marriage may suffer feelings of rejection. They feel insecure: "If mommy and daddy stopped loving each other, maybe they'll stop loving me?" Through divorce, their world may be upended — they suddenly find themselves moving to a new home, a new school, in a new family arrangement.

Studies have found that children of divorce have higher rates of anxiety and depression. They are more likely to have behavior problems, harboring anger and resentment, and more likely to do poorly in school.

They are at greater risk to be involved in drugs and promiscuity.

They are statistically more likely to engage in criminal behavior. And though they may hope for a stable marriage of their own, the daughters of divorced parents have a 60% higher divorce rate than those of non-divorced parents. The number is 35% for sons of divorced parents.

### **Matthew 19:3**

**And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”**

In Jesus’ day there were two views on the subject of divorce. The Jewish school of *Shammai* said divorce was only justified in the case of marital infidelity. But the school of *Hillel* argued that a man may divorce his wife for practically any reason.

**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.”**

Jesus answers their question based on God’s original intent, how it was in the beginning. Notice, **Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and**

**hold fast to his wife.** The word **Therefore** means “for this reason.”

What is the reason? **v.4** says because God made us **male and female.**

Besides the obvious physical differences, there are distinctions in men’s and women’s souls; their way of thinking, and emotional make-up. And that’s the way God intended.

In **Genesis 2:18** God said, **It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.**

Keep in mind, the Lord said this *before* Adam sinned, while he still walked in perfect fellowship with God. That means, even if you know God intimately, you still need relationships

**Even if you know God intimately, you still need relationships with other human beings. It is not unspiritual to get married.**

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(NET) **I will make a companion for him who corresponds to him.**

The word **helper** could be misinterpreted to mean one who is only a servant to the man. But it actually means an indispensable companion who would walk alongside the man.

The word **fit** (or **corresponds**) in Hebrew literally means, *according to the opposite of him*. In other words, God didn't want Adam to be married to a duplicate of himself, but a life-partner who would compliment him, who would supply what was lacking. And logically, that he, in turn, could be strong in areas where she is weak.

That's why it is often said, "Opposites attract." However, many times, what initially attracts us in courtship, later

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repels us in marriage. Marriage is about adapting yourself to your spouse.

**Matthew 19:5 (CEV) He becomes like one person with his wife.**

Over time married couple begin to think like each other. They know each other's thoughts. When I was a boy, my father would begin a sentence and my mother would finish it. In other words, in a marriage a husband and wife have more than regular intimate physical contact, their souls become blended together.

When my father passed away, my mother said it was as if half of her died. A divorce is more than signing a paper. It can feel in your soul as if you have been cut into two.

Notice **Matthew 19:5** says, **a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife**. You can't hold fast to your wife if you're still holding fast to your mommy. This doesn't mean a man forsakes and disowns his parents. But the "apron strings" must be cut. One common problem in marriages is mother-in-law interference. His mom doesn't feel any woman is good enough for her son. She insists on monitoring the wife's every move. A wife resents this.

**v.7 They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?"**

The Pharisees are referring to **Deuteronomy 24:1**. Moses instituted this practice actually as a protection for women. The certificate of divorce was a legal document. It was signed in the presence of witnesses. It was designed to limit frivolous divorces. To keep a man in a fit of anger to hastily dismiss his wife. According to **v.2** with the certificate of divorce, the woman could return to her parents or be remarried. She wouldn't be an outcast from society. She wasn't reduced to the role of beggar or slave.

### Matthew 19:8

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.**”

I think it is safe to say, whenever a divorce occurs, hardness of heart is

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involved. For a marriage to succeed, a married couple must be quick to forgive each other and not keep an inventory of offenses. Some women say they forgive, but in the heated argument, they list a long catalog of hurts and disappointments: *“I remember back in 1996 how you left me standing in the rain while you were playing sports with your friends...and what you said to my mother at Christmas in 1984.”*

### Ephesians 4:32

**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**

This verse doesn't instruct us to forgive others *the way we want to forgive* — but the same way that God forgave us. Does God constantly remind you of all your past sins? Does he rehearse them

every time you do something wrong? Whatever is washed in the blood is erased from his memory.

Actually, if two born-again Christians will purpose to walk in the love of God, there's no reason for their marriage to fail. Failure comes from walking in the flesh.

### Matthew 19:9

**And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.**

Even in this verse, Jesus offers a valid reason for divorce: **sexual immorality.**

The religious leaders asked if it was **lawful** to divorce for any reason. And Jesus told them that it is not God's will. It is certainly not God's will for us to engage in sexual immorality. **Mark 10:11**, says he **commits adultery against her**. In other words, the man who divorces his wife in order to be with another woman has sinned against his wife. **v.12** says the same is true for women.

So it is wrong. But is the divorced person marked for life as a reprobate? Should the person be excluded from fellowship with other believers? Is divorce the unpardonable sin?

In **John 8:4** the same religious leaders brought a woman before Jesus and said, **this woman has been caught in**

**the act of adultery.** What did Jesus say to her? “You will carry this shame to the grave, you are forever marked as unclean?” No, he said to her accusers, “Which one of you hasn’t sinned?” Then he said to the woman, in **v.11, Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.** If he forgave her, and the law commanded her to be, not ostracized but put to death— why would he not forgive a person who has divorced his/her spouse?

**Galatians 6:1**

**Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.**

Divorce is a sin. But the Word of God encourages us to restore those who have fallen gently. Restore them to

fellowship with the Lord.

I know of two ministers who, before they came to the Lord, were divorced. Some Christians criticized them, questioning how God could use such a person? But **2 Corinthians 5:17** says, **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.** Ask yourself this: how could God use a persecutor of the church to write 1 & 2 Corinthians?

**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**

**To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.**

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John & Zhepitoli Roughton

In Matthew, Jesus was speaking to Jews under the law. Here, Paul is writing to Christians living under a new covenant. Paul reaffirms that divorce is not God's will. But he does not say, *"Whoever is divorced should be removed from the church. Hand that person over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh!"*

In any divorce, one is the aggressor — the person who initiates the dissolution of the union, and the other person is the passive recipient. Is a woman at fault if her husband files for divorce? She may have done nothing to deserve the separation. Or perhaps she tried her best to maintain the marriage, but he refused. How can she be blamed for the actions of her husband? Is a man to blame if his wife leaves him? If she

**1 Corinthians 7:39 says Christians should only marry believers. She is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.**

abandons him, is he to be held accountable for her choice?

The church has been quick to condemn the divorced, not realizing that often they are leveling blame at the victim of the "crime" and not the perpetrator. (Of course, most of the time, both parties, the husband and the wife, can share the blame).

**v.12-13 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.**

The Law forbade the Jews to marry Gentiles. **1 Corinthians 7:39** says Christians should only marry believers. She is **free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.** In **Ezra 10:11** the Israelites were commanded to divorce their foreign, pagan wives. But by the Spirit, Paul urges Christians to remain married if their spouse is not a believer, because a believer has a positive spiritual effect on the household.

**v.15 But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.**

But if the spouse is not a Christian, and refuses to remain in the marriage, the believer is not bound to the covenant. In other words, the Christian is not at fault.

I know of several cases where the husband either drank himself to oblivion or gave himself over to drugs, and the wife had no choice but to leave. Some in the church world would criticize such women. But Paul said, (NKJV) **But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart;**

“Yes, but her husband was a believer!” Really? **1 Timothy 5:8** says, **But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.**

The Corinthians asked Paul several questions, like, about eating food offered to idols, gifts of the Spirit, and marriage. In these and other matters, Paul answers their questions in the light of the law of love. In **John 13:34** Jesus said, **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.** Sometimes the best way to answer a question is to ask: *What would love do in this situation?*

It is easy to criticize from a distance. But it might be another matter if you faced the same challenges. The greater part of love is empathy. For example, if a man is physically abusive to his wife, I ask myself, “What if she was my sister or my daughter?” Would I say, “Sorry, but you have to stay in the marriage because the Bible says ‘I hate divorce.’” I think not.

However, it seems the church has trouble maintaining balance. She either veers to one extreme or the other. I do not see that we should have a permissive, casual attitude towards divorce.

Many years ago, I met a wonderful man of God. He was a passionate soul-winner.

Miracles occurred in his ministry. Before he knew the Lord, he divorced his wife. (He confessed to me that it was all his fault.) So he remarried, and none of us objected. But in a very short while, he divorced her. Then a couple of years later he married again. And that marriage ended in divorce as well, after a few months.

**Great marriages don't happen by accident. The Word of God is the best marriage manual.**

I noticed the effect on his ministry. Naturally, people began to lose confidence in him. But more than that, the anointing on his life diminished. Something was lost. He still loves the Lord and is serving God. But he never regained what he once had.

Often the church is quick to condemn the divorced, but it hasn't taught Christians how to have a successful marriage. Great marriages don't happen by accident. The Word of God is the best marriage manual. **(FN)**



My name is Joyti. I was born in a Christian family, but I never knew Jesus Christ. When I was 14 I had an arranged marriage with a Hindu man who was 30 years older than me. I was forced to worship idols, was committed to the Hindu religion for 12 years, but I was miserable on the inside. I already had 2 children by the age of 18, and I lived in bondage. I was depressed, confused, and hopeless.

I wanted to end my life because my husband was mentally and physically abusive. I started attending one church where I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior, but when my husband found out, he stopped me from going to church. Eventually, he left me and the 2 kids. But in 2007 God called me to full-time ministry through a vision. But I was confused and scared. Then in 2009 I heard about Spirit of Faith Bible School and decided to attend, even though my family was against it.

It was the best decision I've made in my life. Spirit of Faith Bible School helped me to discover my purpose and the call of God over my life. I was filled with the Holy Spirit and all my confusions were removed. Jesus became real to me. After graduation, I started my ministry with only 3 people. We held services outside my house for around 7 months.

But we experienced the goodness and faithfulness of God over the years. We recently moved to a better building. Now 300 regularly attend our services. By the grace of God, I am the first female pastor in my entire state. I will forever be grateful to Pastors John & Zhepi and the staff of Spirit of Faith church staff who have been always there for me and helped me to become the person I am today. Many lives have been changed because of their obedience to the Lord. Glory to God!

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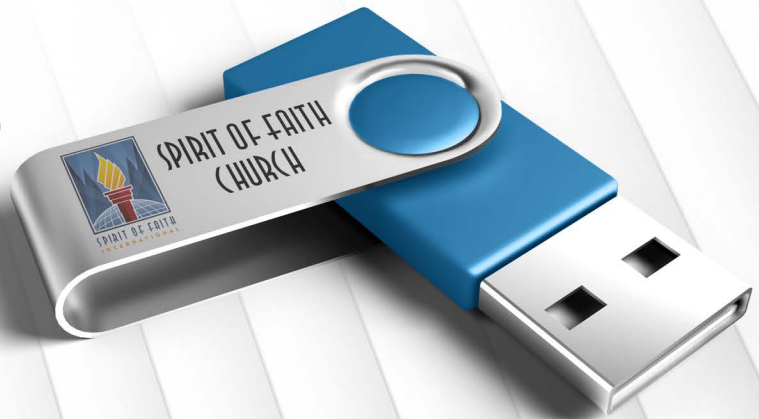
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