

What Does God Say About Divorce and Re-Marriage?

Excerpt from “Goodbye or Go Through: How to Live Happily Ever After When Life is No Fairytale”
By Dallas T. Ruffin

Since God created the man and the woman, and designed marriage Himself, then shouldn't we be consulting Him when it comes to divorce?

If there was a passage in the Bible to begin this discussion with, it would be Matthew 19:3-9. This passage pretty much sums it up in a nutshell.

Matthew 19:3-9

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

The Pharisees (the religious leaders of the day) came to Jesus and purposely tried to trick Him into saying something unfavorable to the crowds that followed Him. They asked if it was lawful for a man to give his wife the Gift of Goodbye for any cause. Jesus doesn't give them a direct answer at first, but talks about God's reasoning for marriage in the first place (the

creation of genders) and the process of marriage (becoming one flesh). Then Jesus says not to mess with that purpose or process. When asked why then did Moses *command* a particular process for divorce, Jesus says that because of stubbornness and the hardness of men's hearts Moses *allowed* people to give the Gift of Goodbye to their spouse, but this was not the Father's intention of how His people were to conduct themselves. We can do things that God has allowed us to do when we lean unto our own understanding and believe that we know better than our Creator's design. But history tells us, that that is not the best idea.

Jesus discusses this principle a few chapters earlier as well.

Matthew 5 [KJV]

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

In both passages Jesus states that any man that gives the Gift of Goodbye to his wife, except for reasons of fornication, and marries again is committing adultery. I know bells, whistles, and sirens are going off in your head, so let's take this step by step. The word fornication here is the Greek word *porneia*; generally meaning illicit or unlawful sexual intercourse.¹

This is also where we get the word pornography from. Some scholars and even some bible translations list this word 'fornication' to be 'sexual immorality' which would include adultery. Because of this, many believers attempt to biblically justify themselves in divorcing their spouse who has cheated on them. However, *porneia* is a different word than the one used later in the verse for adultery; the Greek word *moichao*², referencing sexual intercourse that involves at least one married party.

Since the words then meant basically what they mean now (fornication as the involvement of two unmarried people and adultery the involvement

¹ Blue Letter Bible, Thayer's Greek Lexicon: Strong's G4202, Porneia, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4202&t=KJV>

² Blue Letter Bible, Thayer's Greek Lexicon: Strong's G3429, Moichao, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3429&t=KJV>

of at least one married person); this passage shows us that even some of the deepest wounds that one spouse can inflict upon the other doesn't warrant God's approval of the Gift of Goodbye. In fact, in God's instruction given to Moses the punishment for adultery was death, not a shiny new spouse! [Leviticus 20:10] Covenants are very important to God; and are made on the Gift of Go Through system.

What the word fornication used in Matthew 19:9 does reference is the state of the "virgin" when she is wed. Back then, they had a system to prove that a woman was a virgin on her wedding night, and the woman's parents got to keep the proof. The new couple was to consummate their union on top of the husband's tallit, or prayer shawl. If she was indeed a virgin, the breaking of her hymen would stain the garment. The stained garment would remain in her parent's possession. Should her husband ever accuse her, she could show that she was no fornicator. However, should the wedding night happen and there was no blood stained banner to prove her chastity, he was lawfully justified in having her stoned because she misrepresented herself. (Deuteronomy 22:13-21) Again, adultery (and even fornication) are biblical means to be put to death, not divorce and getting a shiny new spouse.

The question posed to Jesus by the Pharisees in Matthew was referring to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (**Amplified Bible, KJV**).

1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, **because he hath found some uncleanness in her:** then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

3 And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Even in this instruction allowing a “bill of divorcement” and the re-marriage of the woman, the importance of the “until death” marital covenant to God still holds great value. The re-marriage of the divorced woman constituted a defilement, and the first husband could not go back to the wife he gave the Gift of Goodbye to. It was, (and still is) that serious.

Also it is important to notice the reason for that first divorce described in verse 1 “because he hath found some uncleanness in her”. This is a reference to the previous fornication discussion. If she wasn’t a virgin, she was unclean. It wasn’t just for any random reason that justified the Gift of Goodbye, and even this reason was only given because of the hardness of man’s hearts. If our hearts were not hard, we would be following the Way of the Master: the Gift of Go Through.

I have also heard the argument in favor of the Gift of Goodbye in marriage because some say that God divorced His people, so they can divorce their spouse. So let’s look at that.

Jeremiah 3:6-8; 12-14

6 The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

7 And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

And Later

12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.

13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord.

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; *for I am married unto you*. and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

So in verse 8 the Father is quoted as saying that because of the people's spiritual adultery of serving other gods, He has put her away and given her a bill of divorce. Then, just a few short verses later in verse 14, He is quoted to say that He is married to His people Israel. So what gives? Throughout the entire passage, we see the Father attempting to woo His people back to Himself. Even in verse 14 He is yet again declaring His marital covenant with Israel which did not go away, despite her harlotry with other gods. He ends the discussion describing how He will take anyone still willing to be with Him to Zion; because marriage covenants don't expire (in God's eyes) until someone dies.

Paul echoes this sentiment in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 7:39 [AMP]

39 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.

Note that this verse is true even if she was given a "bill of divorcement". Regardless of when married people chose to give the Gift of Goodbye to each other, in God's eyes the covenant is still in place until death; not until 'irreconcilable differences'.

Here are a few more things that the Word of God has to say about divorce and marital separation.

Malachi 2:13-16 (AMP)

13 And this you do with double guilt; you cover the altar of the Lord with tears [shed by your unoffending wives, divorced by you that you might take heathen wives], and with [your own] weeping and crying out because the Lord does not regard your offering any more or accept it with favor at your hand.

14 Yet you ask, Why does He reject it? Because the Lord was witness [to the covenant made at your marriage] between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously and to whom you were faithless. Yet she is your companion and the wife of your covenant [made by your marriage vows].

15 And did not God make [you and your wife] one [flesh]? Did not One make you and preserve your spirit alive? And why [did God make you two] one? Because He sought a godly offspring [from your union]. Therefore take heed to yourselves, and let no one deal treacherously and be faithless to the wife of his youth.

16 For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: **I hate divorce and marital separation and him who covers his garment [his wife] with violence.** Therefore keep a watch upon your spirit [that it may be controlled by My Spirit], that you deal not treacherously and faithlessly [with your marriage mate].

So God the Father is saying here through the Prophet Malachi that He doesn't even receive divorced men's offerings with favor because He was a witness to their marriage covenants (remember how they say 'before God and these witnesses' at weddings?) and they have dealt treacherously with the wife of their youth. I also want to make a note here of the last verse. We often tell each other in the church that "God Hates Divorce" but we don't emphasize the rest of the verse. God also hates marital separation, and domestic violence. (*Incidentally, the King James Version and other translations omit the inclusion of "marital separation" as something that God hates in this verse.*) Then He tells us how to avoid those things: by keeping watch upon our spirits that they may be controlled by His Spirit. That way we will choose the way of the Master and we will choose the Gift of Go through in dealing with our spouse. It is also noteworthy that Malachi puts dealing treacherously and faithlessly together. That would mean that in order to give the Gift of Goodbye to my mate I would have to lack the faith that the Gift of Go Through would bring the results that I was looking for.

Many in Christian leadership make an allowance for divorce in cases of domestic violence. While I certainly understand the compassion in this teaching, it is not found in scripture. As the passage that we just read describes, God hates divorce, marital separation, and domestic violence

and calls all of these actions treacherous and faithless. Using one of these to justify the other would be an act of self-preservation. These acts, like all others that don't please God are forgivable and God can restore anything and anyone willing to be restored; however when we face these crossroads as believers, we are expected to bring our concerns to God and allow His Spirit (not our pain or fear) to control our Spirit and decision making.

1 Corinthians 7

10 But to the married people I give charge—not I but the Lord—that the wife is not to separate from her husband.

11 But if she does [separate from and divorce him], let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband. And [I charge] the husband [also] that he should not put away or divorce his wife.

As we can see here, the marriage covenant is very important to God. What we do with our covenants is also important to God. The Gift of Go through drastically changes marriage because who we are doing it for changes (for God and not ourselves), and therefore what we are expecting out of it changes as well. The Gift of Goodbye says that as soon as your spouse is not meeting your perceived needs and you run out of patience, you can get rid of them and find someone else that you think will serve your needs better. The Gift of Go Through says that you entered the marriage covenant as a way to honor God, and that covenant came with a decision to allow God's Spirit to control ours in decision making and we will have faith for God's will to be done in our covenants despite what we see. We can trust that when we choose obedience to God and choose the Gift of Go through, He is faithful to us, not to necessarily make everything good and painless or make us happy; but to be with us whatever comes, giving us the wisdom and strength to go through.